BearPaw Legal Education & Resource Centre
NEWSWIRE

Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
September 11 – 18, 2015

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Drezus big winner at Indigenous Music Awards in Winnipeg

Musicians from all over Canada collected hardware at the 10th annual award ceremony

CBC News Posted: Sep 11, 2015 7:08 PM ET Last Updated: Sep 12, 2015 12:05 AM ET

Saskatoon rapper Drezus picked up four awards at the 2015 Indigenous Music Awards, including Best Rap/Hip Hop CD for Indian Summer, and Best Music Video for his song Warpath. (@IMA_Awards)

Musicians from all over Canada, and around the world, collected hardware at the 10th annual Indigenous Music Awards, held in Winnipeg on Friday.

The awards, formerly called the Aboriginal Peoples' Choice Awards, feature emerging and established indigenous artists from all over North America. And like the former title of the awards suggest, it is the fans that make the final decision on who wins in each category.

Leading the pack this year was Drezus, a.k.a. Jeremiah Manitopyes. The Plains Cree-Saulteau artist, from Saskatoon, picked up four awards including Best Rap/Hip Hop CD for *Indian Summer*, and Best Music Video for his song *Warpath.*

City Natives, a group from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, were double award winners at the Indigenous Music Awards. (www.ecma.com)

City Natives, a collective of four hip-hip performers from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, were double award winners, winning Best Duo or Group and Single of the Year for their song *Straight Chief'n.*

Country singer and songwriter Armond Duck Chief, from the Siksika Nation on Blackfoot territory, Alberta, also scored two awards for his CD *The One* — Best Country CD and Best Indigenous Songwriter.

And Métis gospel singer Yvonne St. Germaine took home Best Gospel CD award. She has won in that category nine years out of the 10 that the awards have been running.

Check out everyone who took home a trophy from Friday night's ceremony:

Best Album Cover Design: Enter-Tribal — *Hitting The Trail*

Best Country Album: Armond Duck Chief — *The One*

Best Duo or Group: City Natives

Best Flute Album: Ryan Little Eagle — *My Songs My Stories*

Best Folk/Acoustic Album: Jason Burnstick and Nadine L'Hirondelle — *Wrapped in Daisies*

Best Gospel Album: Yvonne St. Germaine — *If You See My Savior*

Best Hand Drum Album: Young Spirit — *Nitehe Ohci: From the Heart*

Best Indigenous Language or Francophone Album: Jaaji — *Nunaga (My Home, My Land)*

Best Indigenous Music Radio Station or Program: National Aboriginal Music Countdown (NCI-FM)

Best Indigenous Songwriter: Armond Duck Chief —*The One*

Best Instrumental Album: Sean Beaver — *Torn*

Best International Indigenous Release: The Bass Invaders — *Dance of the Fox*

Best Music Video: Drezus — *Warpath*

Best New Artist: Kelly Derrickson

Best Peyote Album: Silas & Pierce Biglefthand — *Northern Cheyenne Peyote Healing Songs*

Best Pop Album: Classic Roots — *Hack The Planet*

Best Powwow Album Contemporary: Northern Cree — *Northern Cree Breaking Boundaries*

Best Powwow Album Traditional: Chippewa Travellers — *Honouring Our Biish (Water)*

Best Producer/Engineer: Drezus — *Indian Summer*

Best Rap/Hip-Hop Album: Drezus — *Indian Summer*

Best Rock Album: Will Belcourt and the Hollywood Indians — *Annie Baby*

Best Television Program/Promotion of Indigenous Music: *The Candy Show*

Indigenous Entertainer of the Year: Drezus

Single of the Year: City Native — *Straight Chief 'n*

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/indigenous-music-awards-1.3224505

Life As a First Nations Person in Calgary's Hardcore Punk Scene

By Nikki Celis

Curtis Lefthand, 23. Photos by the author

This article originally appeared on Noisey Canada.

The 2015 Mrs. Universe pageant was more than just show, with Ashley Callingbull Burnham, of the Enoch Cree Nation in Alberta, being the first First Nations woman to win Mrs. Universe. And though numerous problems still continue to plague First Nations people, Callingbull's success is indicative of the recent progress made in regards to First Nations relations: By winning the pageant, she's brought to light various social and cultural issues about being a First Nations person, especially as a woman growing up on a reservation.

Callingbull isn't the only one trying to make an impact. Not everyone can be Mrs. Universe, but there are other ways for one to garner empathy. Take hardcore for example, a community based off of political views, social views, and its DIY ethic. It's a community that espouses a sort of in-your-face liberty, exclusive to those who look for it. For many Calgarians, especially for the youth, the punk and hardcore scene has been a staple of expression for years. It represents a haven where they can express themselves wholly without fear of discrimination or prejudice as well as act as the antithesis to Calgary's conservatism. Yet, for Carlin Blackrabbit and Curtis Lefthand, the Calgary hardcore scene can, at times, be rather insular for reasons such as simply being part of a non-white minority, especially as being two of the few First Nations people being part of the scene. They're not trying to point fingers, though, since a fair amount of the scene's demographic is comprised of suburban, middle-class white people.

Lefthand, 23, of Blackfoot/Sioux descent, sees it as a lack of understanding, not just for the hardcore community, but also for Canadians in general. "It's kind of embarrassing for people to be unaware of issues right in their backyard. These issues aren't well presented in the media and not many people are willing to learn and study First Nations culture and its history," he says. "[Before Callingbull], do you hear about a First Nations kid dying? Have you heard about the missing women? Barely. You have African-American issues on the news all the time; you hear shit happening in India, Nepal, China—these kids know all about that but nothing about us." He scoffs. "They can't interact with a First Nations person because 'we don't know much about you.' It's the lack of education." "All they know are the labels they put on us," Blackrabbit adds. "Free taxes; dental; our

benefits plans; grants; schooling—oh, that makes it easy for us? What's the percentage of students in Canada that are First Nations? Last time I checked it was 16 percent that went into post secondary school."

Currently, Lefthand is studying Business Administration-General Management at Mount Royal University ("I'm one of the lucky ones, I think"). Until he was 16, he spent much of his childhood living in Eden Valley, a reservation 110 kilometers away from Calgary, where he lives now. When I had first met with Lefthand—we met thrice over the course of three weeks—you could say he was rather intense. He has a gaunt, imposing figure, which is further complemented by his height—he dwarfs me by a few feet. Blackrabbit, 23, is of Blackfoot descent, and though he is slightly younger than Lefthand he is just as imposing—albeit more amiable. The third interview was conducted jointly with Blackrabbit; it takes around two hours for him to drive from Siksika Nation to the café, where the interview took place. Much of his time is spent at Siksika, where he works with First Nations youth at Siksika's Residential Youth Wellness Centre. He doesn't come to Calgary often.

Carlin Blackrabbit, 23.

"We get kids from all over the country," he says about his job. "They're traumatized. They're angry. They blame us [the workers] for all their troubles." Many of these kids are troubled youth, something that he empathizes with as he, too, had similar experiences as a child. "Drugs, violence, murder—it happens every day and it can happen every time. You get used to it." Due to the lack of amenities available, outlets of expression such as the arts are few and far between. Blackrabbit laughs, "back in 2006 we had no internet—" "No. We had no internet," Lefthand interrupts. "Well we had dial-up." Blackrabbit chuckles. "CJSW, [Calgary's community radio station], was a good outlet for me. That's where you can hear shows happening through their advertisements. We never had access to downloading music or MySpace. Honestly, in the reserve, when you're not doing anything you're partying. A lot of these kids get into drugs and alcohol. There isn't really a main outlet for them." Lefthand recalls getting into drugs and partying at the age of ten. Back then, fights were commonplace in Eden Valley. He says people would fight each other—for fun—with socks wrapped around their fists. They would eventually resort to

bareknuckle boxing. “Whatever happened to you physically, even if you got broken bones, just happened.”

Dealing with the death of a friend or a loved one was also a familiar sight. “Last summer, one of our friends drowned in a river,” Blackrabbit says. “This past year we’ve lost a lot of youth. I’ve lost six good friends.” A few days prior to the interview, Blackrabbit played a show near Lethbridge. A close friend of his got hit by a drunk driver and was then hospitalized. He sighs, his eyes fixated on his cup of coffee. “It’s a day-by-day thing. You can be hanging out with one of your best friends and the next thing you know you’re in the hospital or even dead.” For Lefthand and Blackrabbit, punk and hardcore were the only outlets they had to cope with the overwhelming amount of adversity beset upon them. Hardcore helped Lefthand deal with the death of his cousin and his father. “It’s kept me alive, out of trouble,” Blackrabbit says. “It’s what I looked forward to as a teenager; I wasn’t into sports.”

There aren’t many punk or hardcore shows, either. Blackrabbit has, for seven years now, tried to have a show at least once a month at Siksika as a way to give back to the community. “Without these shows I probably would have been caught up in getting in trouble with the law, maybe as a drug addict. So, I want to do this for the kids—expose these kids to something new because they’re always used to seeing the same old thing on the reserve, which isn’t good.”

Lefthand performs at Edmonton’s Wunderbar with his emo/post-punk band, Novelty 2015.

Both Lefthand and Blackrabbit have been involved with the punk and hardcore scene in Calgary for some time. However, Lefthand says lately he hasn’t been involved as much as he would have liked as he is too preoccupied with other things going on his life, primarily school. He says one specific problem is the ability to fit in. “When I see newcomers—First Nations people coming to shows, there’s still this dividing line between them. Sometimes, at shows, people who have been in the scene for so long don’t bother to communicate with them. Maybe the promoter will talk to them but no one else will. I’ve seen him (Blackrabbit) at shows and I treated him the same way, unfortunately. I hated myself for doing that and I’ve learned to never do it again.”

“I’ve been on that side,” Blackrabbit says. “Those are my pals, my buddies, and there have been times where no one’s talked to you—you go to a show and you’re just standing

there in the corner waiting for your favorite band to play and you just leave. We come out of the reservation for this. It takes me around an hour-and-a-half to get to Calgary. I'm not saying all white, middle-class people have it handed to them, but we'll never experience going on vacations three times a year. Vacation, for us, is going to the city."

"The weight we, as First Nations people, carry in our community, federally, it's tough to fit in and be a part of a lot of other communities and subcultures because of this sort of disconnect," Lefthand remarks. "Being ignored hurts us severely because we're already perceived so negatively by the Canadian community."

"I just want people to know that we are traveling with whatever money we have left to see these shows… sometimes we have no money; there's not a lot of employment on the reserve," Blackrabbit says. "It's just how passionate we are. We want to be there like everyone else. "A hardcore show is like Christmas morning and when we're there it's the biggest thing that's happened to us for maybe a month."

Nikki Celis is a journalist and writer based in Calgary, Alberta. Follow him on Twitter

Direct Link: http://noisey.vice.com/blog/life-as-a-first-nations-person-in-calgarys-hardcore-punk-scene

First Nations tourism gives snapshot of culture says association head

Wade Davis tells.Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism and Trade Conference tourism could revolutionize industry by encouraging better appreciation of cultural diversity

Wade Davis, author as well as anthropologist and explorer, was keynote speaker at the second annual Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism and Trade Conference

By: Geordon Omand The Canadian Press, Published on Tue Sep 15 2015

VANCOUVER — Tahn Donovan tears up as she recalls watching crows circle above a singing First Nations' man, the birds crowing as he broke into traditional song in the middle of Vancouver's Stanley Park.

"It just really resonated with me," said the Australian aboriginal woman, smiling at the memory of a recent indigenous-led tour she took of the expansive green space.

"That connection with culture and land. . . . To hear somebody sing for their country is really special."

Donovan, who represents an indigenous tourism council in Western Australia, was in Vancouver this past weekend as one of more than 100 delegates at the second annual Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism and Trade Conference.

The three-day event, which ended Monday, brought together indigenous groups from around the world to form partnerships, share stories and discuss best practices on promoting the burgeoning field. A key element explored the value of that unique relationship between First Nations and the environment.

Delivering the conference's keynote address was renowned National Geographic explorer-in-residence Wade Davis who told delegates that indigenous tourism could potentially revolutionize the industry by encouraging a better appreciation of cultural diversity.

"I think there's a moral and huge opportunity to become ambassadors for an entire new way of being, a new geography of hope," said Davis.

But it needs to go beyond leveraging quotas of First nations into the field, he added.

"Real tourism is when aboriginal societies on their own terms can share their visions of life in a profound way that gives the visitor a true sense of authenticity, such that a visitor goes away as an avatar of the wonder of culture."

Aboriginal Tourism Association of B.C. head Keith Henry said First Nations' tourism is unique because it provides a snapshot into a culture and its people.

"We see visitors who are really looking for new experiences, unique experiences — they want to know the true history and story of the land," he said.

"That's what aboriginal tourism does for all of tourism, not just for aboriginal communities but for all of Canada."

Indigenous tourism in B.C. employs 3,400 people, reached $50 million in revenue this year and Henry expects it to hit $68 million by 2017.

Cuts to B.C. Ferries last year prompted criticism from First Nations' entrepreneurs concerned about the impact reduced service would have on offering authentic travel experiences to remote coastal areas.

"It's very important not only for jobs but it's also about cultural sustainability or revitalization," Henry added. "We've seen a lot of communities where tourism has been really the incubator to really helping a new sense of pride in the community."

That was the case with Dennis Thomas, a member of the Tseil-Waututh Nation and general manager of an ecotourism canoe and kayak business in North Vancouver.

"Fifteen years ago I didn't really know anything about my culture," he said.

"Given that opportunity by my leaders to come and learn and know the history of my people and my songs, it just made me a better person."

Direct Link: http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/09/15/first-nations-tourism-gives-snapshot-of-culture-says-association-head.html

How an Inuit Filmmaker Is Using Virtual Reality to Tell Her Culture's Stories

Written by Anubha Momin
September 16, 2015 // 12:00 PM EST

Nunavut may not be the first place that comes to mind when thinking of tech startups—and no wonder, with its aging infrastructure and hefty internet costs. Yet, borne of the place beyond the treeline (and LTE connectivity) is Nyla Innuksuk, a young, Inuit entrepreneur whose foray into immersive, virtual reality filmmaking has already led to collaborations with the likes of composer Philip Glass and hockey player PK Subban.

Armed with a 360° camera rig she built herself, Innuksuk has been capturing scenes around the globe and testing out new ways of expressing and representing herself and her culture—and bringing both technology and teachings back to her home of Nunavut.

"At the core of who I am, I'm an Inuk," she told Motherboard in an interview, "[and] I'm proud of where I come from and I am trying to do the most with what I have been given. And for me that is telling stories."

Innuksuk was born in the hamlet of Igloolik (population: 2,000) and spent her early childhood in Iqaluit (population: 7,000) before moving to southern Ontario. She remembers being drawn to filmmaking and movies at an early age, when on her 13th birthday, she was allowed to watch *The Shining* for the first time. "That weekend, I must have watched it five times," Innuksuk said.

Innuksuk makes it a point to ensure any work she does in or about Nunavut is done in conjunction with "people who are from or were raised in Nunavut"

In 2009, she earned a film and production degree at Ryerson University before going on to work on various movie sets. Innuksuk recognizes that living away has offered her opportunities and advantages she may not have had in Nunavut, but is quick to note that she has "missed out on a lot of equally valuable privileges as well, such as the immediate access to a beautiful culture."

"I don't speak my language," Innuksuk said. "My biological father went through the residential school system and I think that played a part in him not really being a part of my life."

To bridge this gap, Innuksuk makes it a point to ensure any work she does in or about Nunavut is done in conjunction with "people who are from or were raised in Nunavut" on all aspects of productions to development to distribution. And, despite her not being fluent in the language, she insists her films are predominantly in Inuktitut, the dialect that is spoken by most Inuit in Canada.

Last September, for example, Innuksuk brought the story of isolation and survival on the harsh Arctic tundra to TIFF with her short film, *Kajutaijuq: The Spirit That Comes*. Innuksuk produced the film and co-wrote its story with Craig Stewart and director Scott Brachmayer. Filmed entirely in and around Iqaluit, *Kajutaijuq* is a re-telling of an old Inuit myth—which she thinks might be the first Inuit horror film ever made.

In April of this year, Innuksuk joined Pinnguaq, a not-for-profit startup that was founded in Panginirtung, Nunavut (population: 1,500), as a partner. Pinnguaq, which means "play" in Inuktitut, has a mission to embrace "technology as a means of unifying and enabling Nunavummiut"—and a big part of that is rooted in education and cultural preservation.

The studio, which was founded in 2012 by Ryan Oliver, started with Code Clubs in a handful of Nunavut communities, teaching young participants the basics of programming. They then branched into app and game development with products such as Singuistics, an app that helps users practice Inuktitut through songs, and the video game Art Alive, which allows players to enter and interact with elements of a drawing by late Inuit artist Pudlo Pudlat.

When Innuksuk joined the company, it added Pinnguaq Productions, a 360° virtual reality filmmaking division, to its roster, and which Innuksuk runs. "I am an adult that wears a backpack with virtual reality headsets inside," she confesses.

In just a few months, Innuksuk has led her team on a number of groundbreaking projects. Innuksuk travelled to Ecuador in July to film the Pope's visit, capturing the 1.8 million people in 360°. She partnered with Daniel Beckerman of Scythia Films, to produce a

virtual reality trailer for the TIFF-favourite, Bang Bang Baby, wherein users can interact with one of the characters from the film.

She has also filmed live performances of Tanya Tagaq and A Tribe Called Red, and is planning a more immersive project with the latter.

“You’ll be in the middle of an urban pow wow and...you will be able to ‘mix’ your own track,” Innuksuk explained. “If you are looking at just the pow wow dancers, you will only hear traditional music. If you are looking at the city skyline, you will only hear electronic music. There will then be a gradient that will allow you to adjust the song according to what you want.”

This immersion is an integral part of what makes virtual reality an important innovation, but for Innuksuk, the technology can have an important cultural purpose as well—especially when it comes to creating indigenous content.

Innuksuk's upcoming film is about “a group of badass chicks on bikes in Nunavut that kill monsters"

“I think that allowing people to stand in the “virtual” shoes of a minority group that is struggling with issues of identity rooted in the genocide of its cultural foundations through the residential school system is incredibly important,” she said.

And that’s just what Innuksuk is planning to do with her upcoming project, a film about “a group of badass chicks on bikes in Nunavut that kill monsters.” The feature film will be accompanied by a serialized virtual reality component of “found footage.” The currently untitled film will begin production next summer, with a planned release date of late 2017.

“Heavy dramas about social issues and documentaries are important,” Innuksuk explained. “What is equally important is making movies that people actually want to watch for entertainment, but also representative of Indigenous cultures. Or not, to be honest. I think it is also enough that Indigenous filmmakers are making content, even if it isn't Indigenous specific.”

As she did with *Kajutaijuq*, Innuksuk is trying to break free from stereotypes, while using new media to tell traditional and modern narratives, with both cultural and personal authenticity—and that means sticking to a pretty basic formula for success.

“I want to make cool shit,” Innuksuk said. “I want Inuit kids to make cool shit. That's enough for me.”

Direct Link: http://motherboard.vice.com/read/how-an-inuit-filmmaker-is-using-virtual-reality-to-tell-her-cultures-stories

City Natives, aboriginal hip-hop group, win at Indigenous Music Awards

Group won Best Duo or Group and Single of the Year for the song "Straight Chief'n".

By Lisa Blackburn, CBC News Posted: Sep 16, 2015 6:28 PM AT Last Updated: Sep 16, 2015 6:29 PM AT

City Natives, a group from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, won two awards at the Indigenous Music Awards. (www.ecma.com)

Aboriginal hip-hop group City Natives is making history and bringing back some Indigenous Music Awards to the Maritimes.

The group won Best Duo or Group and Single of the Year for the song "Straight Chief'n".

Brandon Arnold co-founded City Natives and says their music is heavily influenced by the communities they grew up in.

Arnold is from the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick. Other members are from Eel Ground First Nation in N.B. and Eskasoni in Nova Scotia.

"We just write about success, really. About how hard work pays off and determination," he said.

He says the win is a first for the aboriginal music community in the Maritimes.

"Just the fact that we're the first ones from the East Coast to really bring one back. I don't think no one has ever done it before," he said.

'We're seeing results'

Arnold calls their sound "original" and says they are influenced by Bone Thugs-N-Harmony and Dr. Dre.

The group's members have known each other for about a decade, but formed City Natives so they could enter into the East Coast Music Awards.

But Arnold says they have their sights set on other awards — the Juno Awards.

"We figure we're getting there, we're getting close to it. We are achieving all the goals and all the steps we needed to get there. We're seeing results and we really feel we got a good chance this year," he said.

The Indigenous Music Awards were held in Winnipeg this year and Arnold says it was a shock to hear their names called during the ceremony.

"It's an honour to be a part of the awards in general, to even receive four nominations. The fact that we bring home two awards is just a bonus. It means a lot," he said.

The group has just been nominated for Aboriginal Artist of the Year at the Nova Scotia Music Week Awards in November.

Next month, they go to Atlanta to perform at a music festival that will feature big name hip-hop artists like Wiz Khalifa.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/city-natives-aboriginal-hip-hop-group-win-at-indigenous-music-awards-1.3231161

A photograph that deliberately misinterpreted indigenous art

September 17, 2015. 9:31 am • Section: Art Seen

Posted by:
Kevin Griffin

The catalogue for the 1991 exhibition of Inuit art at the Inuit Gallery of Vancouver starts with a description of the works.

“Macabre faces, bulging eyes and tooth grins greet and captivate the viewer,” says the catalogue Kitikmeot: Land of the Spirits.

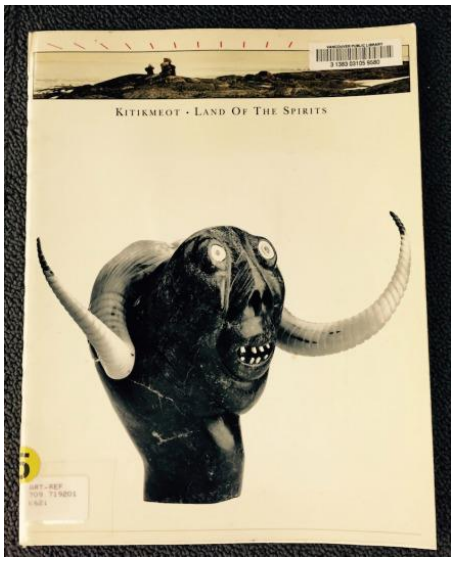
“To many, the work is a challenge and the gargoyle expressions require time to appreciate. To others, it is an instant attraction, like adopting a friend and feeling safe in their presence.”

No doubt about it: the works in the exhibition were scary. In some, faces and mouths were twisted and contorted; in others, eyes were crossed or had stunned expressions with bulging, googly eyes. Others were figures in awkward poses or were caught in a painful looking state of transition between animal and human.

I’m one of those who immediately liked the works in the catalogue. They all looked incredibly inventive and very different from traditional Inuit sculpture made for tourists. The innovative carvings and sculptures included those of Nick Sukkuark whose work often captures humans in the state of transformation into other beings.

The catalogue goes on to say that “many cultures reflect ‘scary’ imagery in their art that is often misinterpreted.” The image at the top of this blog is a good example of the kind of deliberate misinterpretation that occurs when someone of one culture is confronted with scary images from another.

It was taken by a photographer for The Vancouver Sun. He staged a photograph of one of the sculptures: Shaman/Muskox Transforming by Judas Ooloolah. A more documentary photograph of the sculpture appeared on the front cover of the catalogue (below).



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The staged photo completely undercuts Ooloolah's powerful sculpture. Rather than try to capture the work as it is, it tries to turn it into something it's not. By making it look as if it's performing a banal act of everyday personal hygiene, the photograph takes the 'bite' out of the work's spiritual and supernatural qualities. Rather than helping interpretation, the photograph actively obstructs it.

I wonder too about whether its status as indigenous art had anything to do with the way it was photographed. Would a sculpture by a non-indigenous artist have been treated the same way?

The staged photograph was in the photo file for The Vancouver Sun but I couldn't find out for sure if it ran in the paper. If it didn't, it would have been unusual for the original to filed away. Someone must have thought it a good enough photo to keep for posterity.

The exhibition focused on the work of three brothers: Nelson Takkiraq, Charlie Ugyuk, and Ooloolah. They're all artists from a region of the north known as Kitikmeot which means "in the centre." It refers to three Inuit communities in the Boothia Peninsula: Spence Bay (Talujjuak or 'the hiding place'), Gjoa Haven (named after Roald Amundson's ship which was the first to navigate the Northwest Passage), and Pelly Bay (Kugaardjuk, named after a nearby river.)

The area was originally home to the people known as the Netsilingmuit – the people of the seal. In 1934, other Inuit from Cape Dorset, Pond Inlet and Pangnirtung moved to the remote area. The mix of different Inuit groups led to artists creating unique works in whalebone and stone that was unlike other Inuit art.

Images, top to bottom: From the exhibition Kitikmeot: Land of the Spirits, Inuit Gallery of Vancouver, Photo: Ken Oakes, The Vancouver Sun, Nov. 18, 1991; from the front

cover of the catalogue showing Shaman/Mustkox Transforming by Judas Ooloolah, Photo: Kevin Griffin.

Direct Link: http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2015/09/17/when-a-photograph-deliberately-misinterprets-indigenous-art/

Aboriginal Business & Finance

Iqaluit's 1st microbrewery approval prompts naming contest

Nunavut is about to get its own brewery, and locals are already looking forward to the territory's new brews

By Natasha MacDonald-Dupuis, CBC News Posted: Sep 10, 2015 4:34 PM CT Last Updated: Sep 11, 2015 8:02 AM CT

Iqaluit is about to get its own microbrewery, and residents have plenty of suggestions for naming Nunavut's new brews. (CBC)

Many residents were excited to find out that Iqaluit is getting its own microbrewery — and are already making their voices heard on names for Nunavut's newest signature product.

On Thursday morning the Nunavut Liquor Licensing Board approved the Nunavut Brewing Company Limited's application to start producing and selling beer in the territory.

Sheldon Nimchuk of the Nunavut Brewing Company said his group will hold a contest on social media to come up with original names for the beer products. He says they may make some beers with local berries.

Iqaluit locals had plenty of suggestions for Nimchuk and the Brewing Company.

"Culturally significant names would be nice, instead of tourist catch phrases like 'polar beer'," said resident Trevor Ploughman.

"An animal...maybe Nanook beer? That would be fun to ask for at the bar," said Amoudla Kootoo with a smile.

Many stressed the importance of choosing names that would reference Nunavut.

"Arctic Brew or something like that. It's got to reflect the North," said Emmanuel Morakinoyo.

"Something that reflects Inuit culture. Leave it up to the Inuit to decide," said Zachary Green.

The ideas were also flowing on social media. On Facebook, names like "True North," "Hoppy Husky," and "Nunabeer" were suggested, and plenty of people made their choices known via Twitter.

"I don't know about a name," said resident Cedric Rusaka, "but it's a good idea for the economy, and I think people will appreciate the opportunity to get some draft beer for a change."

One resident did express concern about the project.

"It could help with jobs, but we have an alcohol problem here. I think they should be restricted and controlled," said Lizzie Amarualik.

But most said they can't wait to try the new brews.

"I'll be a customer for sure," said Kootoo.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/iqaluit-microbrewery-approved-name-contest-1.3223435

Famous explorer: Aboriginal tourism could revolutionize the industry

National News | September 15, 2015 by APTN National News |

The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER – Renowned National Geographic explorer-in-residence Wade Davis says he thinks Aboriginal tourism can build a new geography of hope.

Davis was in Vancouver yesterday, delivering the keynote speech to the second annual Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism and Trade Conference.

The three-day event brought together indigenous groups from around the world to form partnerships, share stories and discuss best practices on promoting the burgeoning field.

Davis says the growing field of Aboriginal tourism has to be about more than boosting quotas of First Nations in the industry.

He says he thinks there's a moral and huge opportunity to become ambassadors for an entire new way of being.

Davis told his audience that First Nations groups engaging in tourism on their own terms could revolutionize the sector by encouraging a deeper appreciation of cultural diversity.

He explained his belief that Aboriginal tourism can give visitors a sense of authenticity and cultural wonder, and said First Nations tourism operators have the opportunity to be ambassadors for a new breed of tourism that helps protect and celebrate the cultures of the world.

Aboriginal Tourism Association of B-C head Keith Henry agrees that First Nations' tourism is unique because it provides a snapshot into a culture and its people.

He says visitors are really looking for new experiences, unique experiences and want to know the true history and story of the land.

Indigenous tourism in B-C employs 34-hundred people, reached 50 million dollars in revenue this year and Henry expects it to hit 68 million dollars by 2017.

Direct Link: http://aptn.ca/news/2015/09/15/famous-explorer-aboriginal-tourism-could-revolutionize-the-industry/

Aboriginal Community Development

Strength of Our Women gala honours accomplishments of indigenous women

By Creeden Martell, The StarPhoenix September 10, 2015

Tala Tootoosis is nominated for a award at the SFNWC Gala being held in Saskatoon, September 10, 2015.

Tough issues such as missing and murdered indigenous women are important, but it's also vital to shine a light on the strength, resiliency, and contributions of Saskatchewan's indigenous women.

That's why rapper Lindsay Knight, also known as Eekwoll, was honoured when organizers asked her to perform at the inaugural Strength of Our Women Awards Gala Thursday evening in Saskatoon.

Knight said there's often a "depressed feeling" attached to First Nations issues.

"We need to balance out that negativity," she said, adding the gala, hosted by the Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Commission, is long overdue.

“It’s about time,” she declared. “Celebrate the women who work to stop violence and confront societal issues in their community.”

Knight, who has participated in past aboriginal initiatives such as Walking with Our Sisters and Sisters in Spirit, talked about a song called “îskwêwak, iskotêw, tapwêwin,” Cree for “women, fire, truth.”

Knight described it as a “power song,” a way to empower her, and all women, to confront racism and shaming, and the issue of identity.

“Indigenous women are very hard workers. They’re the unsung heroes in their communities, and they do so much from morning to night, raising children, participating in community initiatives, and working full-time jobs.”

One such woman is Tala Tootoosis, who was nominated in the Arts and Entertainment category.

Tootoosis said she was stressing out about bills and life as a mother of three children when she learned of her nomination. She is friends with some other nominees on Facebook, and everyone was elated, she said.

“I cried,” she recalled. “I knew then, I wasn’t going to give up. It’s the idea being celebrated that matters. None of us cared who won, just that we were being recognized (for our work). It shows that someone out there knows, and it’s as if they said ‘We know it’s hard, keep going.’ ”

Tootoosis said she is a recovering addict and began her journey in 2002. She was addicted to crack cocaine and methamphetamine.

“I didn’t use methadone or anti-depressants,” she said of her recovery.

It started when family members, social workers and addictions counsellors staged an intervention. Recovery involved traditional First Nations methods, medicines, and ceremonies and culture.

Tootoosis later enrolled at the First Nations University of Canada and studied social work. She now works as an addictions counsellor in Saskatoon.

The organizers of the gala asked her to perform, as she is a spoken word poet. She jumped at the chance to confront indigenous issues.

“There’s an old saying, ‘When one Indian stands up, they stand up for everybody,’ ” she said.

“There are so many obstacles,” Tootoosis said of the struggles faced by indigenous women. “People are going missing, and getting murdered — not getting hit by a car, not having an accident, they’re getting murdered and no one knows who’s behind it.”

The gala will offer a chance to address societal issues like ignorance of indigenous issues and confront people who may not think their views, opinions, or words are racist.

“There are people who belittle what it means to be a woman, and an indigenous woman,” Tootoosis said. “We’re worth more than that, we’re worth respecting.”

Tootoosis mentioned her teen daughter and her fear that a stranger may harm her or grab her from school.

“Having that mentality makes it hard to feel worthy as a human being, as a person,” she said.

Direct Link: http://www.thestarphoenix.com/worth+respecting/11354595/story.html

Students from First Nations acclimatizing to city life

Students look over orientation materials at the Maadaadizi Orientation event on Friday. More than 1,000 students attending post-secondary institutions in Thunder Bay identify as Aboriginal.

Jon Thompson, tbnewswatch.com
2015-09-12 at 20:24

THUNDER BAY -- Michaela Bottle has been to the city before but since she moved to Thunder Bay to start college this week, she's already been here for the longest stretch of her life.

The crowds sometimes bother the 19-year-old Early Childhood Educator student from Mishkeegogamang First Nation. Thunder Bay's population is 100 times the size of the community where she was raised. She's concentrating on the positive aspects of having

so many people around, filling her time playing baseball, soccer and broomball. When there's no game on, she's going shopping.

"My time kind of slips by, I guess," Bottle said. "I'm having too much fun out here."

The transition from living in First Nations to the relative bustle of city life can be more difficult for some students. That's why eight education and agency partners started throwing Maadaadizi in the first week of school outside of the Boys and Girls Club to help acclimatize post-secondary students to their new surroundings.

Maadaazdizi is the Anishinaabek term meaning "he or she begins a journey" and organizers wanted to make sure supports like how to see a doctor or how to use public transit can help the journey run smoothly.

"We have a lot of students who come from remote or rural First Nations communities," said Maadaadizi chair, Darby Starratt, adding 1,000 post-secondary students in Thunder Bay identify as Aboriginal.

"It's quite an adjustment coming to the city so it's great to have everybody come out and support them and show them what there is in Thunder Bay for them to access and that there's lots of friendly people here."

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose spoke among dignitaries from Thunder Bay City Council, Lakehead University, Confederation College and Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day. Waboose spoke of the importance of staying tied to the cultural roots of education while pursuing higher learning.

"While you go through the education process that's going to be available to you here in Thunder Bay, I want you to also remember, we also have a traditional form of education and that's the teachings that our elders -- the teachings that our parents -- have taught us about the land, about our treaties, about the importance of respecting and honouring one another," he said.

"I urge you to do that becuase it's just as important as the education you're going to receive this year."

Direct Link:
http://www.tbnewswatch.com/News/375220/Students_from_First_Nations_acclimatizing_to_city_life__

With no clean water for 17 years, hundreds rally for federal action for Shoal Lake

CTVNews.ca Staff
Published Saturday, September 12, 2015 9:54PM EDT

A First Nations community that has lived with unclean drinking water for 17 years and no road access for a century hopes this federal election will be their watershed moment.

The Shoal Lake 40 First Nation has been under a boil water advisory for nearly two decades due to a dam that pulls tainted water away from an aqueduct and streams it towards the reserve.

The aqueduct supplies nearby Winnipeg residents with fresh, clean water.

Shoal Lake 40 First Nation band member Sharon Redsky speaks to a crowd of hundreds gathered in Winnipeg on Sept. 12, 2015. The crowd aimed to put pressure on the federal government for $10 million to build a road, an essential step in securing clean water to the community that has lived under a boil advisory for 17 years.

Shoal Lake supplies water to Winnipeg.

Community elder Grace Redsky from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation performed a water healing ceremony at a man-made channel made to support Winnipeg's water system which has cut them off from the mainland Thursday, June 25, 2015. (John Woods / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

To make matters worse, the Ojibway community has been cut off from the mainland for nearly one hundred years and is thus forced to cross the lake year-round. The journey becomes precarious as the seasons change, and nine people have slipped through winter ice and died in the last 15 years.

“There’s a huge human cost to getting on and off this reserve,” band member Sharon Redsky told CTV News.

The First Nations community has lobbied all three levels of government for $30 million to build an all-weather road, which supporters call “Freedom Road.” The route is considered a first step before the community can build a water treatment plant, kick-start economic development and secure a safe route to their front doors.

The city of Winnipeg and provincial government are both willing to pay $10 million, but the federal government under Conservative Leader Stephen Harper has failed to commit to the plan.

But as the marathon election ramps up, Freedom Road’s supporters hope to steer the unbuilt route into debate territory.

A rally was held in Winnipeg Saturday as hundreds of demonstrators marched through the streets and gathered at the Manitoba legislative building to call on national leaders to take action. Several MP hopefuls and local politicians were among the protesters, including Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger.

"Let's hope that the federal election generates a result of justice for the people of Shoal Lake Band 40," Selinger said through a megaphone.

Both the Liberal and NDP candidates for Winnipeg Centre attended the rally. Each said they would honour a $10-million commitment.

"It's a small price to pay to ensure the people of Shoal Lake have clean water," Liberal candidate Robert-Falcon Ouellette said.

"All levels of government should be paying their fair share to finish the Freedom Road," said NDP candidate Pat Martin.

Conservative candidates in Winnipeg did not reply to CTV Winnipeg's requests for comment. The Green party has pledged to support the road's construction.

The issue has long plagued the community, which straddles the border of Ontario and Manitoba. An online fundraiser was launched in June to raise $10 million after a visit from Natural Resources Minister Greg Rickford failed to materialize any solid commitment.

During Rickford's June visit, several residents wept as he reiterated the government's pledge to pay $1 million for a design study.

"For 100 years, Shoal Lake 40 First Nation has had to pay so Winnipeg could get fresh water," resident Stewart Redsky said at the time. "Our people deserve an answer today."

Direct Link: http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/with-no-clean-water-for-17-years-hundreds-rally-for-federal-action-for-shoal-lake-1.2560835

Franklin Centre announcement catches Inuit Heritage Trust off-guard

'We were surprised to hear the news,' says Inuit Heritage Trust about Franklin expedition research centre

By Sima Sahar Zerehi, CBC News Posted: Sep 14, 2015 1:10 PM CT Last Updated: Sep 14, 2015 4:30 PM CT

'We were not directly consulted about our involvement on this one,' says Eva Aariak, the president and chair of the Inuit HeritageTrust. (Sima Sahar Zerehi/CBC)

The Conservatives have released details about a proposed Franklin expedition research centre in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut, but one of the partners they list in a news release says it was unaware of the details and caught off-guard by the announcement.

The facility would be a research and conservation site for the wreck of HMS Erebus and its artifacts. The announcement was first made by Conservative Leader Stephen Harper during his campaign visit to Iqaluit.

"We were surprised to hear the news, and we were not directly consulted about our involvement on this one," says Eva Aariak, the president and chair of the Inuit Heritage Trust.

'I think this centre is going to open some opportunities for the community,' says Louie Kamookak, a historian in Gjoa Haven who has been helping with the Franklin Expedition research.

Aariak says that if her organization had been consulted, it would have recommended working with an existing facility in Gjoa Haven, instead of creating a separate centre.

"I think there are other options that would work better," says Aariak, mentioning the Nattilik Heritage Centre, which opened in the community two years ago, "perhaps by looking at a bigger picture and [thinking] about expanding that facility instead."

Conservative MP for Nunavut and candidate Leona Aglukkaq says that, if re-elected, her government will provide more than $16 million over five years to build the Franklin Centre in Gjoa Haven.

"Inuit organizations and local community members made this historic discovery possible, and now we need to ensure it is preserved and promoted for the benefit of Nunavummiut and all Canadians," writes Aglukkaq in a news release.

Some residents in Gjoa Haven are optimistic about the project's ability to create jobs and stimulate the local economy.

"I think this centre is going to open some opportunities for the community, since we are pretty close to the Erebus site and all the sites that are related to the expedition," says Louie Kamookak a local historian in Gjoa Haven who has been helping with the Franklin research.

Nunavut's Leona Aglukkaq says if re-elected the Conservative government will provide more than $16 million over five years to build the Franklin Centre in Gjoa Haven. (Parks Canada)

Kamookak says he has not been invited to a consultation about the new centre, but is excited about the proposed facility.

Honouring 'somebody who's a failure'

Meanwhile, two other federal candidates in Nunavut question the announcement.

The NDP's Jack Anawak says a research centre is a good idea, but thinks more consultation with Inuit is needed on the facility and name.

"Honouring somebody who's a failure I don't think is a good idea," says Anawak, "I mean he failed at first at finding the Northwest passage, and secondly, failed at surviving in the North when he could have survived by using the expertise from the North."

Liberal candidate Hunter Tootoo agrees on the need for more consultation.

But he is skeptical that the project will ever get off the ground.

"It's not being built yet, it's just a campaign promise from a party that's in third place in the polls right now, so you know, it really doesn't mean anything," says Tootoo.

Sir John Franklin left England with 128 crew members in 1845 in hopes of discovering the Northwest Passage. The expedition included HMS Erebus and HMS Terror.
Both ships got stuck in the ice in 1846 and were abandoned two years later off the west side of King William Island, according to Inuit accounts. Erebus was discovered late last summer. Researchers continue to study the shipwreck.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/franklin-centre-announcement-catches-inuit-heritage-trust-off-guard-1.3226928

Manitoba chiefs want 2011 flood evacuees home before $495M diversion built

Manitoba chiefs calling on province to halt construction until flood evacuees back in permanent homes

CBC News Posted: Sep 15, 2015 9:55 AM CT Last Updated: Sep 15, 2015 3:56 PM CT

Traffic was held up on Highway 6 near Fairford, Man., Tuesday afternoon as a group of First Nations protestors rallied against a $495-million flood diversion plan for Lake Manitoba.

Chiefs, community members and even students gathered on the highway near the Fairford River Water Control Structure to call attention to the 1,900 flood evacuees who remain displaced after 2011 flooding in the area.

"Enough is enough, and enough talking," said Little Saskatchewan First Nation band councillor Darrell Shorting. "This government don't want to listen. Never mind these peaceful protests, it's time the younger generations, our age group, take a stand."

Protesters gathered at the Fairford Structure on Highway 6 on Tuesday to protest $495 million in funding for flood channel construction while hundreds of evacuees displaced by a 2011 flood remain out of their homes four years later. (Alana Cole/CBC)

Protesters said they're not happy the Manitoba government has committed $495 million to flood mitigation in the area but has failed to secure permanent homes for the people who used to live there and were displaced by flooding four years ago.

On Tuesday, dozens of people walked down the highway, blocking traffic for much of the day and called on Manitobans to demand flood evacuees are returned to permanent homes before construction begins on the diversion channels.

"How much more lands? How much more natural resources are we going to give up to this government?" said Shorting. "No more."

Elder Bertha Sumner was displaced from Lake St. Martin First Nation in 2011.

"I saw people getting in the bus with just a little bag, just like we were going to stay for a week in the city. Nobody ever said anything about how long we were going to be gone," she said.

Not everyone was forced out of their homes, though, and some of the people who have remained in the area have now been told due to a high water table, their homes are growing mold.

Pinaymootang First Nation Chief Garnet Woodhouse said since 2011, a number of families in his community have learned their homes are no longer safe to live in.

"There are four families that were evacuated in November [due to] mold," he said.

According to the protesters, the province used the Portage Diversion, the Fairford Structure and the Shellmouth Dam to divert water from populated areas in southern Manitoba and avoid major flooding in those areas in spring 2011.

Instead, a number of First Nations were flooded, and evacuees remain displaced four years later.

In July, the province announced plans to build a second outlet channel from Lake Manitoba to Lake St. Martin and for the current channel to be enlarged.

A group of Manitoba chiefs aren't happy about the Manitoba government's plan to build a $495-million flood channel for Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. (Province of Manitoba)

Now, the group wants flood claims and compensation for the evacuees sorted out before construction on the flood channel begins.

"Before half a billion dollars is spent on a diversion in the Interlake, every man, woman and elder needs to be brought home to a safe community," said Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Derek Nepinak.

Provincial officials released a statement in response Tuesday afternoon, saying they shared the goal of returning 2011 flood evacuees to their community as soon as possible.

"The province has set aside $100 million as part of a comprehensive settlement package and resettlement agreements have been signed with the four affected First Nations. Part of the resettlement process is mitigating the effects of possible future floods," the statement read in part. "The governments of Canada and Manitoba are jointly funding the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin outlet channels, which will help protect residents of

the First Nations communities in the Lake Manitoba basin from the impacts of chronic flooding."

The statement said discussions with First Nations on solutions are continuing.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-chiefs-want-2011-flood-evacuees-home-before-495m-diversion-built-1.3228847

1 in 5 Manitobans will be aboriginal by 2036: StatsCan

CBC News Posted: Sep 17, 2015 9:32 AM CT Last Updated: Sep 17, 2015 4:32 PM CT

Canada's aboriginal population is growing faster than the population as a whole, Statistics Canada reports. (Jillian Taylor/CBC)

The indigenous population in Canada is growing and projected to swell to as many as 2.6 million people by 2036, a new report by Statistics Canada says.

The agency projects one in five people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan will be aboriginal by 2036 — welcome news to Diane Redsky, executive director of Winnipeg's Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. The organization works to support and rebuild aboriginal families in the city.

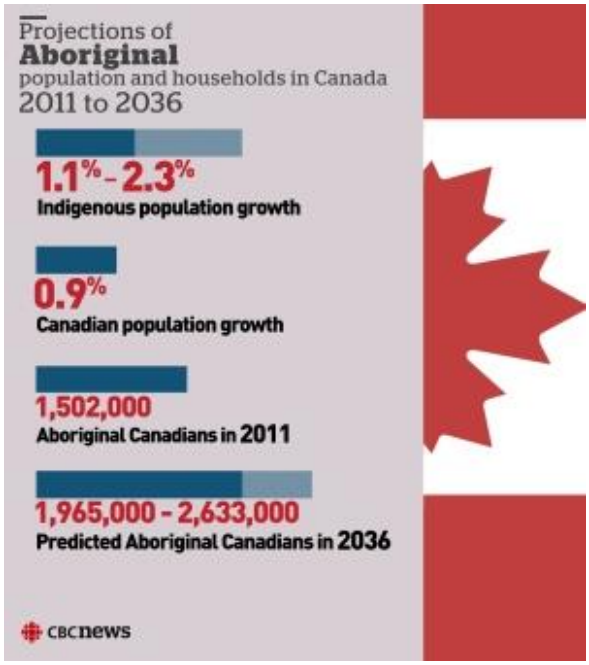
"I couldn't be more excited about the news. This is really going to change the landscape in the City of Winnipeg," Redsky said.

We're going to see more indigenous people in leadership roles, more teachers, more in government - *Diane Redsky, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre*

The indigenous population in Canada is projected to grow between 1.1 per cent and 2.3 per cent annually between 2011 and 2036, compared to 0.9 per cent for the general Canadian population, said Statistics Canada.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan were singled out as the two provinces with the highest proportion of aboriginal people in the country.

The growth is driven by a higher birth rate among indigenous people and an increase in people self-identifying as aboriginal, the agency said.



Statistics Canada released a report on the country's growing aboriginal population on Thursday. (CBC)

"We see children as gifts from the Creator," Redsky said.

The growing aboriginal population presents a major opportunity for Manitoba, she said.

"We're going to see more indigenous people in leadership roles, more teachers, more in government," she said. "It's really going to have a positive impact."

Winnipeg was singled out as racist in a Maclean's magazine article earlier this year, with aboriginal residents talking about overt prejudice they've faced. Manitoba has also struggled to deal with issues such as a high aboriginal child poverty rate and poor conditions on First Nations, among other issues.

Redsky said the Ma Mawi Wi centre alone supports approximately 25,000 individuals in Winnipeg. Inclusion is key to insuring the next generation of indigenous children thrive, she said.

"As a community we need to be included in our systems and throughout what happens in Winnipeg," she said. "Until that happens we will continue to be marginalized. ... Our children need to be proud of who they are."

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/1-in-5-manitobans-will-be-aboriginal-by-2036-statscan-1.3232062

Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement

Winnipeg Police Board indigenous council members unveiled

Police officials speak to board about high number of missing persons in CFS care

CBC News Posted: Sep 11, 2015 12:12 PM CT Last Updated: Sep 11, 2015 4:42 PM CT

Friday's meeting of the Winnipeg Police Board was packed with onlookers interested in learning more about the number of children in CFS care who go missing. (Caroline Barghout/CBC)

At least one member of the Winnipeg Police Board says a shift in societal attitudes is needed to address root issues when it comes to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Leslie Spillett, a member of the police board, said there are many social issues that lead indigenous women to work the streets, and yet they are somehow blamed for their circumstances.

Without a shift in people's attitudes, the root of the problem will never be addressed, Spillett said.

"Why do men get up in the morning and think on their way to work that they're going to buy an aboriginal woman, sometimes a child? Why?" she said.

"Why are our women being targeted as prostituted women?"

This comes just as the board named 16 people to a new council aimed at improving relations between police and the city's aboriginal population.

The Indigenous Council on Policing and Crime Prevention, which was unveiled on Friday, includes community leaders, elders, youth, advocates and family members of missing and murdered women.

The council aims to provide information, knowledge and advice to the police board, which set objectives and policies for the Winnipeg Police Service, on indigenous people's safety concerns and priorities.

The 14 council members include:

- Bernadette Smith, co-founder of the Drag the Red initiative, which has volunteers searching the Red River for evidence related to any missing and murdered indigenous women cases.
- Cora Morgan, the new family advocate with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.
- Willie Starr, whose sister, Jennifer Catcheway, has been missing since 2008.
- Damon Johnston, president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.
- Shauna Fontaine, violence prevention and safety co-ordinator with the Southern Chiefs Organization.
- Kyle Mason, executive director of the North End Family Centre.
- Geraldine Shingoose, a residential school survivor and a community leader with more than 25 years of expeience in social work.

Two alternates were also named to the committee.

"I'm honoured that such an outstanding group of local indigenous people has agreed to advise the board on how the priorities we set for the Winnipeg Police Service can better reflect the needs and values of our indigenous communities," Coun. Scott Gillingham, who chairs the police board, stated in a news release Friday.

"Our board is looking forward to working with and learning from this council."

Working on preventative, intervention measures

The announcement came as police Chief Devon Clunis, deputy chief Danny Smyth and other top police officials appeared before the board on Friday morning to discuss the service's second-quarter update report.

The report includes a section discussing the safety and protection of indigenous women that says no new investigations related to missing and murdered indigenous women were opened between April and June of this year.

Smyth said officers have been working on preventative measures.

"What we've tried to do is expand that and enhance that to include some preventative and some intervention opportunities, as well as some community engagement," he said.

"We're really trying to approach this very holistically so that it's not just enforcement and investigation, also includes intervention and prevention."

The police service's counter exploitation unit identified seven new sex trade workers and made "intervention contacts" in 91 occasions between April and June.

Five men were arrested during that period and police conducted six sexual exploitation investigations.

The report is the second to be released since the police board asked the force for quarterly reports on missing and murdered indigenous women last year.

Missing kids in CFS care also discussed

The latest report also states that officers deal with an average of about 550 missing persons reports a month. Of that number, 82.6 per cent involve kids in government care and 71 per cent are female.

Habitual and chronic runaways account for 68 per cent of missing persons cases. The report noted that 22 people had 15 or more missing persons incidents in the second quarter of this year, accounting for 20 per cent of the total number of cases.

Another police report prepared for the police board meeting shows the top 19 addresses associated with missing persons reports are Child and Family Services (CFS) facilities.

Smyth told the board on Friday that the majority of missing persons cases consists of short-term chronic missing persons, primarily runaways from CFS group homes.

Police officials also noted that officers are engaged in about 19 incidents a day involving children and youth in CFS care.

Smyth said police check areas where missing children and youth may go. He added that in most cases, they return on their own either later in the day or the next day.

Clunis said most of the issues brought up by the police board are societal issues, not policing issues, but he agreed that the community as a whole needs to do more to address them.

During the meeting, Gillingham asked officials how often police talk about issues with CFS authorities.

Smyth said police work on a daily basis with StreetReach, a provincial government unit that works with children and youth who are at high risk of being victimized through the sex trade.

He added that police dedicate a lot of resources toward finding missing children because it's important to find them and bring them back safely.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-police-board-indigenous-council-members-unveiled-1.3224624

Nunavut coroner's office ready to start inquest into suicide

"I encourage all Nunavummiut to share your painful memories for a better future of Nunavut"

THOMAS ROHNER, September 11, 2015 - 3:19 pm

Nunavut's chief coroner, Padma Suramala (far left), her legal counsel, Sheldon Toner, and Northwest Territories coroner Garth Eggenberger at a press conference in Iqaluit Sept. 10 ahead of a two-week inquest into Nunavut's high suicide rates that's set to begin Sept. 14. (PHOTO BY THOMAS ROHNER)

A coroner's inquest into Nunavut's chronically high rate of suicide will finally get underway Sept. 14 at the Nunavut Court of Justice in Iqaluit.

The discretionary inquest, first announced by the territory's chief coroner Padma Suramala in January 2014, will span two weeks, will be open to the public and will include an opportunity for public input, if time permits, Suramala and other officials explained at a Sept. 11 news conference in Iqaluit.

Suramala decided to hold an inquest after revealing in January 2014 that 45 Nunavummiut died by suicide in 2013 — the highest annual number since 1999.

The purpose of the inquest is to inform the public about the social conditions in Nunavut which lie behind the high suicide rate in the territory, and to encourage front-line workers across the territory engaged in suicide prevention, said the coroner's lawyer, Sheldon Toner.

Originally, the inquest was to be held in the fall of 2014, but the start-date was delayed twice because of the difficulty in finding families affected by suicide who are willing to participate, justice minister Paul Okalik told the Nunavut legislature this past June.

The final number of families participating in the inquest is two — down from the five that Suramala originally said she hoped would participate.

Those two families will testify on the afternoon of Sept. 14, according to a schedule of the inquest handed out at the news conference.

Garth Eggenberger, a coroner from the Northwest Territories who will preside over the inquest, will select a six-person jury on the morning of Sept. 14.

The jury will be responsible for coming up with recommendations on how different territorial departments and organizations can better address the high rate of suicide in Nunavut.

Before the jury deliberates, its members will hear testimony from different government departments, as well as from the Nunavut RCMP, Inuit organizations, academics and suicide prevention organizations.

Members of the public will get an opportunity to provide their input at the inquest, Suramala said Sept. 11, so long as the inquest stays on schedule.

Sept. 22 has been set aside for the inquest to hear those comments, Eggenberger said, between 9:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. on the fourth floor of the Allavvik building. That's the yellow office building located at the entrance to Inuksagait Plaza.

Members of the public wishing to comment, should contact Suramala ahead of time at 975-7292 or PSuramalaJUS@gov.nu.ca.

"I encourage all Nunavummiut to share your painful memories for a better future of Nunavut," Suramala said.

After the jury's recommendations are distributed to the different organizations, Suramala said her office will provide oversight on the implementation of those recommendations by checking in with the organizations every six months.

"We need a change in the way that Nunavut is treating suicides," Eggenberger said.

There were 27 deaths by suicide in Nunavut in 2014, and as of this past September here had been 26 deaths by suicide in the territory so far this year.

Since 1999, 486 people in Nunavut have died by suicide: 393 males and 93 females. The overwhelming majority of those deaths — 479 — occurred among Inuit. Only seven non-Inuit people have died by suicide in Nunavut since 1999.

People who struggle with suicidal thoughts may contact the Kamatsiaqtut help line in Iqaluit at (867) 979-3333 or toll-free at 1(800) 265-3333, from 7 p.m. to midnight.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_coroners_office_ready_to_start_inquest_into_suicide/

Edmonton court to hear charter argument about aboriginal juries

Defence lawyer says charter challenge scheduled to be heard in December

CBC News Posted: Sep 14, 2015 11:41 AM MT Last Updated: Sep 14, 2015 11:41 AM MT

The defence lawyer for Jeremy Newborn says his Charter challenge about the lack aboriginal jurors is now scheduled to be heard in December. (CBC)

A murder case that has been winding its way through the courts for almost three years is now scheduled to be back in front of a judge in December to hear arguments about the fairness of jury selection.

Last fall, the lawyer for an aboriginal man charged with second-degree murder made an application that challenged the way a jury pool was brought together, saying it included no aboriginal people.

Jeremy Newborn has pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder in connection with a fatal beating on an LRT train in December 2012.

Newborn's trial was originally set to start in Edmonton Court of Queen's Bench in October 2014.

The case was put over after defence lawyer Simon Renouf challenged the jury.

On Monday, Renouf said his Charter of Rights and Freedoms challenge in the case is now scheduled to be heard during a week-long hearing in mid-December.

According to a motion filed by Renouf last fall, 186 people were called for jury selection on the day the trail was set to begin.

At Renouf's request, Newborn's mother walked among the potential jurors waiting on the third floor of the courthouse. She determined that not one of them was aboriginal.

Given that about 60,000 people, or six per cent of Edmonton residents, are of aboriginal descent, Renouf argued that it was "almost statistically impossible" for a randomly selected group of people not to contain a single aboriginal person.

Renouf said the odds of that happening were about one in 250,000. The lack of diversity in the pool of potential jurors, he said, was suggestive of a systemic problem.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in May that the manslaughter conviction of an Ontario aboriginal man should not be overturned because of a lack of aboriginal jurors.

By a 5-2 margin, the high court found that a northern Ontario community made reasonable efforts to ensure the jury in a manslaughter case had adequate aboriginal representation.

The decision overturned the 2011 Ontario Court of Appeal ruling that found the absence of aboriginals on the jury violated Clifford Kokopenace's constitutional rights, and threw out his 2008 conviction.

Renouf told CBC News the Supreme Court decision will have some bearing on the Newborn case. He said under Alberta legislation, no one with a criminal charge or conviction can sit on jury.

He said he plans to call an expert witness who will say the rules impact aboriginals more than anyone else.

John Hollar, 29, was critically injured in a beating that began as a northbound LRT train left the Coliseum Station Dec. 28, 2012. He died in hospital two days later.

A trial in the case is slated to begin next April.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-court-to-hear-charter-argument-about-aboriginal-juries-1.3227502

Judge reserves decision in Bruce Carson influence-peddling trial

Terry Pedwell, The Canadian Press
Published Tuesday, September 15, 2015 11:47AM EDT
Last Updated Tuesday, September 15, 2015 6:24PM EDT

OTTAWA -- A judge has reserved her decision in the case of Bruce Carson, a former top aide to the prime minister who is charged with influence peddling.

Ontario Superior Court Justice Bonnie Warkentin told the court she will announce Oct. 2 when she plans to release her ruling.

Crown prosecutor Jason Nicol said he expected the decision to be brought down anywhere from a few days after that procedural hearing to the beginning of November, leaving open the potential for Carson to be either acquitted or convicted before election day Oct. 19.

Bruce Carson arrives at an Ottawa courthouse on Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2015.

As his two-day hearing wrapped up Tuesday, Carson's lawyer said his client worked in 2010 and 2011 to help an Ottawa company sell water treatment systems for First Nations communities.

"There's no question about that," Patrick McCann said.

But nothing in the Criminal Code prevented Carson from doing that, said McCann. He stressed that his client was lobbying First Nations communities, not the federal government, to purchase water purification equipment from a firm known as H2O Pros and H2O Global, where his girlfriend at the time, a former escort, was employed.

McCann also conceded that Carson clearly held sway with the Harper government. Carson was a senior adviser to the prime minister from the time the Conservatives first took office in 2006, until he left the post in 2008.

"There's no question that my client was motivated to help H2O and, by extension, his girlfriend," McCann told the judge.

But that, McCann said, was irrelevant.

He pointed to a protocol for procurement of goods by First Nations, developed in 2009, which he said made clear that aboriginal communities exercise control over what they buy and how they buy.

"It was entirely up to the aboriginal bands" to determine whether to buy water purification systems and from whom to buy, he said.

Testimony provided at Carson's preliminary hearing, made public in this week's trial, showed Carson first went to Shawn Atleo, then the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, to seek guidance in 2010 about who to approach in helping H2O Pros sell their treatment systems.

Carson told investigators that Atleo advised him to speak with two officials in the Aboriginal Affairs department.

But Nicol told the court any suggestions that the AFN was in control of procuring water treatment devices would be false.

And he countered that Carson returned repeatedly to officials in the Aboriginal Affairs Department, known at the time as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, or INAC, even offering to pay for officials to travel to Saskatchewan for demonstrations of the water systems.

The AFN made clear it was a "peripheral player," said Nicol.

"INAC isn't just holding the purse strings, they were heavily involved," he said.

Court also learned Tuesday that Carson sent emails in early 2011 to the owner of H2O Water Professionals Inc., saying the government was considering several pilot projects that could provide business to the firm.

But Nicol said communications from INAC showed no such pilot projects existed.

Carson has pleaded not guilty to a charge under Section 121 of the Criminal Code, which prohibits anyone from using their influence with the government to obtain benefits for themselves or someone else.

The trial has provided more fodder for Stephen Harper's opponents who question the prime minister's judgment when it comes to appointing the people around him.

Harper asked the RCMP to investigate Carson after media reports surfaced about his involvement with H2O.

The prime minister avoided commenting directly about the trial on Monday, saying the case involves accusations about a private citizen who had long ago left his employ.

But evidence produced at the trial shows Carson still had direct access to cabinet ministers and senior staff in the Harper government, who appeared willing to entertain his attempts to promote H2O Pro's products as a way to help First Nation communities fix their long-standing water quality problems.

After Carson left the PMO, he moved to Calgary to head an energy think tank which was given $15 million in funding from Industry Canada.

Direct Link: http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/judge-reserves-decision-in-bruce-carson-influence-peddling-trial-1.2564146

Family members, RCMP testify at start of Nunavut suicide inquest

“I was told that I don’t have enough love, and I was blamed"

THOMAS ROHNER, September 15, 2015 - 10:00 am

Nunavut's chief coroner, Padma Suramala (far left), her legal counsel, Sheldon Toner, and Northwest Territories coroner Garth Eggenberger at a press conference in Iqaluit Sept. 10. Eggenberger is presiding over an inquest into Nunavut's high suicide rates which began Sept. 14 and is expected to last two weeks. (PHOTO BY THOMAS ROHNER)

The coroner's inquest into Nunavut's persistently high suicide rates got underway in Iqaluit Sept. 14 with the family of an 11-year old suicide victim from Repulse Bay describing for the inquest's jury the aftermath of the young boy's death.

Antonio "Rex" Uttak died by suicide on Aug. 10, 2013, but his mother, grandmother and aunt all testified that he was a happy child and that the suicide came as a shock.

"He was my baby, and he hugged me all the time. It was true love. I don't know what was wrong with him," Martha Uttak, Rex's mother, said at the Nunavut Court of Justice Sept. 14.

"He was such a happy boy… he used to come to my apartment to play with his cousins almost every day," said Mary-Ann Uttak, Rex's aunt.

"We have no clue what happened to him," said Rex's grandmother, Bernadette Uttak. "The healing is never done, can never be done."

Nunavut's chief coroner called a discretionary inquest in January 2014 after revealing that suicide had claimed 45 lives — including Rex's — in 2013.

Garth Eggenberger, the inquest's presiding coroner, oversaw the selection of a six-member jury, with two alternate jurors, on the morning of Sept. 14.

The job of the jury, whose members include Inuit and non-Inuit, is to listen to evidence over the next two weeks from families touched by suicide, government staff, Inuit organizations and academics and then to come up with recommendations on how to control Nunavut's suicide crisis, Eggenberger explained.

Around 10 lawyers representing different parties filled the courtroom, along with RCMP officers and social workers, as Rex's aunt described the events leading up to the boy's death.

Rex was one of 18 family members staying at his grandmother's place — a four-bedroom house in Naujaat — when he died by suicide, Mary-Ann explained.

But it was at his aunt's nearby house where Rex's body was discovered on the morning of Aug. 10, 2013, his aunt added.

Mary-Ann said she arrived home the previous night to find Rex and one of his cousins sleeping on the living room couches.

"I touched both of them on the face and said, 'good night'," Mary-Ann said.

Her husband discovered Rex's lifeless body the next morning, dragging his nephew to the kitchen floor and performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR, to revive him.

Mary-Ann said she immediately called the local health centre.

"I couldn't say anything, so when they answered, I started yelling. I couldn't find my words, I was just screaming."

Her husband took the phone from her, so Mary-Ann said she started performing CPR on her nephew, and her husband then went outside the house looking for help.

But after 10 minutes of CPR, Mary-Ann said her nephew wasn't responding.

"Me and my two kids were alone in the house with my little nephew laying on the floor and I couldn't stand it anymore. So I went outside and I was yelling for help for maybe 15 or 20 minutes."

Cpl. Terry Burns testified Sept. 14 that he arrived at the house shortly after receiving a call from the local health centre, around 9:30 a.m.

Rex's family spoke of coping with intense grief, not only from Rex's suicide but from the suicide of two of his brothers — including one just four months after Rex's death — and of the brutal murder of Rex's sister, Tracy Uttak, in Igloolik in November 2012.

Rex's grandmother, Bernadette, said the inquest should have been held sooner.

"As Inuit, we try to make peace with the death of an individual, and it is very difficult when you are at peace now, and you have to take stuff backwards… like it just happened recently," she said.

“As a mother and grandmother… it’s like we’re going to be blamed. You think, what did I do wrong as a parent or as a grandmother?”

Rex’s mother, Martha, said community members sometimes made her feel guilty in the comments they made after the boy’s suicide.

“I was told that I don’t have enough love, and I was blamed… I was told it was my fault, that I need more love.”

Many of the questions posed by lawyers at the inquest focused on the aftermath of Rex’s death and how similar tragedies can be avoided.

“[Children] have to be talked to more when they’re younger, to let them know you love them all the time… because the hope is only by love,” Martha said.

Cpl. Burns, answering questions from lawyers, testified that the RCMP in Nunavut do not receive any cultural training specific to Inuit, nor any mandatory training focusing on suicide prevention.

And while the RCMP provides training to their members on how to notify next-of-kin when someone dies, that training does not specifically cover situations of suicide.

Testimony began in the late afternoon Sept. 14 on the death of Clyde Akumalik, the son of Iqaluit councillor Joanasie Akumalik, who died by suicide in June 2013.

The inquest continues Sept. 15 when suicide researcher and academic Jack Hicks is expected to testify.

Social workers are available throughout the inquest at the Iqaluit courthouse, as well as at all community health centres, for people struggling with suicidal thoughts.

People who are dealing with pain and grief can also contact the Kamatsiaqtut help line in Iqaluit at (867) 979-3333 or toll-free at 1(800) 265-3333.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674family_members_rcmp_testify_at_start_of_nunavut_suicide_inquest/

Families in First Nation student death inquest relieved to have start date

CBC News Posted: Sep 17, 2015 3:46 PM ET Last Updated: Sep 17, 2015 3:46 PM ET

Lawyer Christa Big Canoe says every family they work with on the inquest has said their priority is to ensure prevention of death. (CBC)

A lawyer for some of the families of young First Nations people, who died after coming to Thunder Bay to attend high school, says they're relieved, anxious and hopeful now that the date for an inquest has been set.

Ontario's Chief Coroner announced Wednesday that the inquest into the circumstances surrounding their deaths will begin Oct. 5.

Christa Big Canoe is the legal advocacy director at Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto. She said the families have been waiting years for the inquest to begin.

"It's a monumental thing," said Big Canoe. "On the one hand, it's exciting in some ways. But, it's also anxiety-creating because they've been waiting so long and there's been anticipation."

She said like any person experiencing a loss, the families know it will be difficult to hear some of the information presented during the inquest. But, Big Canoe said they hope they will also hear answers, and recommendations.

"Every family that we work with on this inquest has clearly told us that their priority is to ensure prevention of death," said Big Canoe. "There is a legitimate fear in northern communities to send their children to Thunder Bay or to urban settings for school."

The inquest is expected to hear from about 200 witnesses, and will run until March 2016.

The students died during a 10-year period, ending in 2011.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/families-in-first-nation-student-death-inquest-relieved-to-have-start-date-1.3232557

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Pond Inlet educator wins national literacy honour

Elijah Tigullaraq recieves 2015 Council of the Federation Literacy Award

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, September 10, 2015 - 4:00 pm

Elijah Tigullaraq, far right, poses with Qikiqtani School Operations co-workers Iqqalik Kooneeluisie, Tina Alookie and Joyce Carter in this 2013 photo. (PHOTO COURTESY OF NTEP/NAC)

A Pond Inlet educator has earned a national literacy award for his work teaching Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) to Nunavut newcomers.

Elijah Tigullaraq, a bilingual language consultant, is the recipient of the 11th annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award for Nunavut, Premier Peter Taptuna announced Sept. 8.

The award, handed out in each of the country's provinces and territories each year since 2004, was awarded to Tigullaraq for his work with the territory's education department over the last 35 years.

"As an outstanding and dedicated educator, Elijah has not only inspired numerous students, but also his co-workers," Taptuna said in a Sept. 8 release.

"On behalf of the Government of Nunavut, I would like to express my sincerest appreciation of Elijah's important contributions to his community, and encourage him to continue his work in strengthening literacy in our territory."

While working for the Qikiqtani School Operations, Tigullaraq wrote several articles on Inuit culture for his non-Inuit colleagues to help them better understand their new environment.

"Southerners/newcomers have a greater appreciation for the Inuit if they have a better understanding of the culture/language/North/Arctic/community," Tigullaraq wrote in a perspective piece he shared with other government employees.

“Lack of knowledge can result in lack of respect for another. It’s great to know why people do things, and how, without criticism. These articles will promote understanding and clarify misunderstandings for newcomers.

“Sharing my Inuit culture with others has helped me to better understand who I am, where I came from and where I may be going,” Tigullaraq added. “I now have a greater appreciation for Inuit and for myself.”

Past Council of the Federation Literacy award winners in Nunavut have included Inhabit Media co-founders Neil Christopher and Louise Flaherty, Iqaluit Centennial Library volunteer Catherine Hoyt and Cambridge Bay elder Annie Neglak.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674pond_inlet_educator_wins_national_literacy_honour/

Six Nations working to run own child welfare program

Hamilton Spectator
By Nicole O'Reilly
Sep 11, 2015

Six Nations is moving to take over child welfare services for the First Nations community, including hiring its first director to oversee the transition.

The community announced this week it has hired Crystal Doolittle, a Six Nations member with a long history of studying and working in child welfare, as the director of O Gwadeni:deo.

The move, which has been talked about for more than 30 years and has officially been in the works for the last five, has the support of both the province and the children's aid society that operates on the reserve.

Doolittle was part of the working group established by Six Nations in 2010 that oversaw community consultations. Now she will lead the team, which also includes a cultural adviser and several other staff.

"It's difficult to fit a whole community into a Western-based philosophy," she said of the need for Six Nations to run its own children's aid society.

Issues unique to First Nations communities include intergenerational trauma from the residential schools program and having a much broader definition of "family" for raising children, which in indigenous culture includes all supporters and not just blood-relatives.

The term "auntie," is often given to people who are not actually blood relatives, Doolittle said.

Barriers for families on Six Nations run the gamut from having difficulty accessing appointments because of a lack of public transportation to a lack of trust with the current children's aid model.

Brant CAS, which oversees care for Six Nations, is happy to support the move, said executive director Andrew Koster, noting that its board has on three occasions passed unanimous motions in favour.

"We want them to run their own services," he said. "We believe that the service has to come from a community framework with community values and community decision-making."

Brant CAS used to have an office on Six Nations, but moved staff back to Brantford two years ago at the request of the Six Nations Elected Council.

The agency has 23 staff members from First Nations communities, many who work directly with families on Six Nations. Koster said the hope is some Six Nations staff members will be able to transfer over to the new agency.

Out of about 300 kids in care with Brant CAS, 63 are First Nations children, he said, noting that most are living with family members in their community. Their care would be transferred to the new agency.

Provincial funding for operating in Six Nations amounts to $3.5 million — money that would shift over to the new Six Nations agency if approved.

Nationally, the rate of child welfare investigations is higher among indigenous communities. A 2011 report by the Assembly of First Nations called Kiskisik Awasisak: Remember the Children, found a fourfold disparity in investigations rate.

Doolittle also notes that there are many children from Six Nations who live off the reserve and she doesn't believe they have a real picture of how many come into contact with child welfare.

The issue of who should have control over the well-being of aboriginal children resurfaced during two controversial cases of parents refusing chemotherapy treatments in favour of traditional healing for their daughters.

McMaster Children's Hospital took Brant CAS to court over its refusal to intervene in one of the cases, with the judge ultimately ruling aboriginal values have to be considered.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is also supporting Six Nations to achieve designation for child welfare services, said spokesperson Anne Machowski.

Nine indigenous communities in Ontario have made this transition already, including seven in northern Ontario, the Akwesasne Child and Family Services on Cornwall Island and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.

There is a specific five-phase protocol that communities must follow to become designated child welfare agencies, beginning with a community assessment and a business plan, leading to working alongside an existing CAS and then, eventually, working independently.

Doolittle says Six Nations is now in the second stage. It's not clear how long it will be before they are in a position to start working with families.

The working group is in the process of creating a "community commission" that will include 10 members to oversee the program. Doolittle said they are being careful to not create a double standard of care for kids on the reserve.

It's not about lowering standards, but actually heightening them by embracing their culture, she said.

"We get the added bonus that not only do we have the ministry standards that we look to uphold, but also cultural standards."

Direct Link: http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5839309-six-nations-working-to-run-own-child-welfare-program/

U of W marks 12% aboriginal enrolment

Winnipeg Sun

First posted: Monday, September 14, 2015 09:34 AM CDT | Updated: Monday, September 14, 2015 02:48 PM CDT

The University of Winnipeg. (Winnipeg Sun files)

Twelve per cent of students at the University of Winnipeg this year are aboriginal.

U of W, which released its initial enrolment data for the school year on Monday, now has among the highest participation rates for First Nations, Metis and Inuit students in Canada, up from 10% last year. Overall, the university had a 1% increase in enrolment, with 9,487 students. A total of 5.8% are international students. "We are honoured to be attracting a rich diversity of students and talent which is one of our primary goals as Winnipeg's downtown university located on Treaty One land, in the heart of the Metis homeland," said U of W president and vice-chancellor Annette Trimbee.

"By working closely with the community, we have created numerous pathways into UWinnipeg as well as specific supports for non-traditional students, including adults and newcomers to Canada. We see this as one of our biggest strengths."

Red River College also released enrolment data on Monday, reporting 2015 numbers remained consistent with last fall. In the past 15 years, RRC has seen its enrolment increase by 66%.

Direct Link: http://www.winnipegsun.com/2015/09/14/u-of-w-marks-12-aboriginal-enrolment

Gap between education of aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Canada widening

Study finds proportion of non-aboriginal people in the country graduating from university is improving at a faster rate

September 16 2015

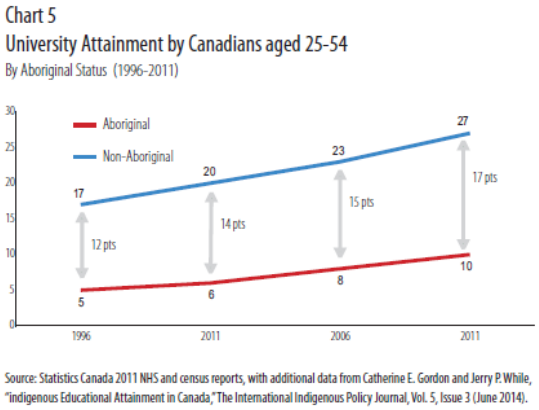
- By Ellie Bothwell

The education achievement gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Canada is getting wider, a study has found.

While the proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in the country aged between 25 and 54 with a university degree increased by two percentage points from 2006 to 2011 (8 per cent to 10 per cent), the educational attainment of non-aboriginal Canadians improved at a faster rate (23 per cent to 27 per cent), according to research from the Environics Institute.

“Canada deserves its reputation as a world leader in equity in education, but this reputation is tarnished once the situation of aboriginal peoples is considered,” Andrew Parkin, the report's author, said.

“While the education attainment of aboriginal people in Canada is increasing, the achievement gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples at the higher end of the education attainment spectrum is still getting wider.”



The study also found that while there is no significant achievement gap between immigrants and non-immigrants in the country overall, certain racial groups are less likely to go to university.

More than 80 per cent of second-generation immigrants whose parents came from Africa or China pursue university studies by the age of 21, but only 36 per cent of those from central and southern America and the Caribbean do, the report found.

Direct Link: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/gap-between-education-aboriginal-and-non-aboriginal-people-canada-widening

Saskatoon School sites get bulk blessing

By Janet French, The StarPhoenix September 16, 2015

A priest, an aboriginal elder, and four school trustees walk into a field.

Beside a towering mound of dirt, they sprinkle holy water onto the muddy ground, burn sage, and pray.

In one ambitious morning, a busload of people made a six-stop, 75-kilometre trek around Saskatoon to bless the ground where six new Catholic schools are under construction.

“When you bless a site, it’s a dedication of the place that you are and the people that are involved to God’s service, and that’s what we do as a Catholic school division,” said Greater Saskatoon Catholic School board chair Diane Boyko.

The division has always blessed its construction projects, she noted. Including a First Nations component in the ceremony began in 2012, when construction started on Holy Family school in the Willowgrove neighbourhood.

The third stop on Wednesday’s omnibus blessing was the future site of St. Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic school in Stonebridge. A handful of students read a passage and Father Kevin McGee blessed the land and the people working to construct the school. The school division’s First Nations and Metis cultural leader, Delvin Kanewiyakiho drummed and sang, and performed a smudge by burning sage and wafting the smoke over elder Celia Clennell.

Clennell prayed for the construction workers, and the future students and school staff.

First Nations and Metis children will likely attend the school, and culture is an important part of their education, Kanewiyakiho said.

“It’s a good way to start this dream, this project, so when the children come to school, they’ll feel that it’s a good place. Basically, we’ve paved the ground for good things to happen here.”

The group prepared different songs and blessings for each of the schools based on their namesakes.

The Catholic sides of the new joint schools weren’t the only blessed construction sites.

In June, a staff member in Saskatoon Public Schools’ First Nations, Inuit, and Metis education unit visited each of that division’s four new school sites in Rosewood, Stonebridge, Hampton Village and Evergreen, division spokesman Rod Drabble said.

“A site blessing is an opportunity to show respect for the land and Mother Nature before the site is disturbed by construction and becomes the home to the new school,” Drabble said in an email. “The blessing acknowledged the people who used or lived on the site in the past, those who will be working on the site during construction, and the students and families who will be a part of the future school community.”

The first such blessing Drabble can recall in the division was during the 2009 opening of a cultural centre at Mount Royal Collegiate.

The provincial government is spending $635 million to build and maintain nine double-barrelled school buildings, each of which will house a public and Catholic elementary school and daycare centre. The public-private partnership (P3) project came as a result of intense pressure on schools near fast-growing areas of Saskatoon and Regina. Eight new schools are under construction in Saskatoon, two in Martensville, two in Warman, and six in Regina. They're meant to open in September 2017.

The Catholic school division plans to have another set of blessing ceremonies once the schools are complete.

Direct Link:
http://www.thestarphoenix.com/news/saskatoon+school+sites+bulk+blessing/11368950/story.html

Education Minister excited by "Following their Voices" program

Jason Kerr Published on September 16, 2015

Education Minister Don Morgan was at Wesmor Public High School in Prince Albert on Wednesday to get a first-hand look at the school's "Following their Voices" program.

Education Minister Don Morgan chats with a Wesmor Public High School student about his artwork during a visit on Wednesday morning.

Morgan toured classrooms, talking with students and teachers about the program, and afterwards met with the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Board.

After the tour, Morgan said he was pleased with how the program was working.

“We’re excited by this and we’re hopeful that it will go a long ways to helping us deliver the goals we want.”

The program is geared towards First Nation and Metis students, with the goal of developing positive student-teacher relationships while improving overall attendance and participation.

It’s based on an education model created in New Zealand, although it received several tweaks from the Saskatchewan government after consulting with First Nations elders and community leaders.

Morgan said the provincial government has made aboriginal education a priority. He acknowledges that not enough has been done to increase First Nation and Metis graduation rates, and said the government has set ambitious goals to help those students succeed.

“As a province, we don’t do well enough with First Nations and Metis graduation rates. We’ve made it a target to close the gap by atleast half by the year 2020. We’re making some progress, but we know we have a lot of work left to do, and this is part of that.”

After testing it out last year at Wesmor and five other Saskatchewan schools, the government is rolling “Following their Voices” out across the province. A total of 17 schools will use the program this year, 12 of which are on reserves.

The federal government will fund “Following their Voices”, even though it’s a provincial initiated. Morgan said it could be expanded to even more schools next year, as long as the funding is there to do it.

Times are a changing

Wesmor principal Cory Trann said they are already seeing plenty of student success with “Following their Voices.” Early reports say attendance is rising, and with it student enthusiasm.

However, the program doesn’t just impact students. It’s a bit of a change for teachers too. Thankfully, it’s a good one.

“I’m more culturally responsive as a teacher, so I’m paying more attention to where my students are coming from,” Wesmor teacher Tricia Lucyshyn said.

There’s a heavy cultural component to the program, with an emphasis on First Nations and Metis content. Basically, teachers are more sensitive to what goes on outside of school, while trying to bring positive aspects of that world into the classroom.

“When they feel welcome and safe (in school), they come,” Lucyshyn said.

The big challenge is getting teachers to buy in to the concept. It's a bit of a role change, going from strictly a teacher, to someone who has to meet more than just educational needs. Lucyshyn said teachers have to power to make sure negative experiences from outside the classroom don't have an impact inside it, but it's not a quick fix.

"It's not going to happen overnight," she said. "This is a big change, and it's going to be a journey."

Direct Link: http://www.paherald.sk.ca/News/Local/2015-09-16/article-4278489/Education-Minister-excited-by-Following-their-Voices-program/1

Indigenous youth ask for self-defence course

Kids say they want skills to help them feel safe on the streets.

Martial arts expert Christina Keeper throws a punch towards Jarita Greyeyes during a martial arts demonstration on Wednesday.

By: Dave Baxter Metro Published on Wed Sep 16 2015

Young Indigenous people have been asking for ways to feel safe on the streets of Winnipeg, and an upcoming self-defence workshop hopes to help them take their safety into their own hands.

The University of Winnipeg's Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre has partnered with martial arts expert Christina Keeper to offer a self-defence workshop to members of their Sacred Seven program.

Sacred Seven works closely with Indigenous youth teaching them about having healthy relationships, and ways to build self-confidence.

The program also offers physical activity, and many in the group have been clamouring to learn self-defence.

“They came to us and they said they wanted to learn to defend themselves and we thought it was a great idea because we know our young people can be very vulnerable,” said Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre manager Jarita Greyeyes.
Keeper, who will teach the course, said when she first came Winnipeg as a teenager she felt unsafe, so she eventually made the decision to learn martial arts.

“It’s not a good statistic that there are so many missing and murdered aboriginal women, so I wanted to be safe,” said Keeper.

“As a young woman I was lacking self-confidence, and I wanted to build that and be able to protect myself.

“A lot of girls have brought up the issue to me about missing and murdered women so I was listening to all these girls and I had a light bulb go off.

“I said ‘these girls should know how to protect themselves.’”

Keeper will also use the course to teach youth about staying away from situations where they could be vulnerable, because ultimately she never wants someone to have to defend themselves to stay safe.

“A lot of this is about confidence so they can walk around with their heads held high.”

The workshop happens this Sunday.

Direct Link: http://www.metronews.ca/news/winnipeg/2015/09/17/course-helps-indigenous-youth-take-safety-into-their-own-hands.html

U of W boasts higher indigenous enrolment

Indigenous student population climbs to 12 per cent, up from 10 per cent last year

CBC News Posted: Sep 14, 2015 10:01 AM CT Last Updated: Sep 14, 2015 10:01 AM CT

A large group of Manitobans gathered at centre court in the Duckworth Centre as part of the University of Winnipeg's spring powwow. In fall 2015, 12 per cent of students enrolled at UWinnipeg self-identified as indigenous. (Michael Fazio/CBC)

The University of Winnipeg says it has one of the highest proportions of First Nations, Metis and Inuit students in Canada.

For the fall 2015 semester, the proportion of self-identifying indigenous students enrolled at the school rose to 12 per cent, up from 10 per cent the year before. The total number of students enrolled at the university stands at 9,487.

"We are honoured to be attracting a rich diversity of students and talent which is one of our primary goals as Winnipeg's downtown university, located on Treaty One land, in the heart of the Metis homeland," said Annette Trimbee, president and vice-chancellor in a news release.

A spokesperson for the university cited the Opportunity Fund as one of the specific programs helping attract indigenous students to the school.

The fund offers a range of financial incentives, including tuition credits and bursaries, to indigenous students as well as to new Canadians and refugees. To date, more than 250 students have taken advantage of the program and graduated, according to U of W's website.

The rise in indigenous participation in Winnipeg is part of a national trend.

A June 2015 report from the Environics Institute found "education attainment" of indigenous peoples is increasing; however, higher education participation is also on the rise for non-indigenous students, and so the achievement gap between the two groups continues to widen.

According to the same report, 10 per cent of aboriginal people in Canada have a university degree, compared to 27 per cent for non-aboriginal Canadians.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/u-of-w-boasts-higher-indigenous-enrolment-1.3227237

Aboriginal Health

Stigma of Mental Illness Cuts Deeper For Canada's Aboriginal People

Posted: 09/10/2015 12:25 pm EDT Updated: 09/10/2015 12:59 pm EDT
Sandra Charron, Mom Postpartum RN Blogger Bipolar II

I recently attended a mental health first aid course in order to further educate myself on the various mental illness disorders, the consequences of their severity and their overall prevalence in the population. This course is a means of developing the tools to help in a crisis situation before an emergency team arrives on the scene, i.e. suicide intervention, psychotic episodes. The students were eager to learn and participate. The course leader was interesting and insightful. My own eyes were opened to an entire population of our Canadian people whose rate of suicide was too horrifying to further ignore.

As statistics related to aboriginal suicides were listed, I realized that this war being waged against the stigma of mental illness is but one of the many battles that will need to be addressed honestly in order to understand the magnitude of the affliction our mentally ill population is facing, and our aboriginal population in particular. As communities of aboriginals are fighting an invisible disease, society can dismiss the reality of the stigma by citing drugs and alcohol as the weak link in this people's history.

Statistics will state that First Nations people have the highest rate of suicide in any Canadian province. According to Statistics Canada in 2012, the national average itself was alarmingly high with 11.5 deaths per 100,000 people.

But among aboriginal people, the national average for First Nations males is 126 suicides per 100,000 people and for First Nations females it is 35 per 100,000. I'll admit that while listening to the statistics, although I was writing as fast as my pen could scrawl on my notepad, my mind had not really registered the immensity of this tragedy until one of my

classmates spoke up. His name is Herman Harper, community support worker for Holistic Health Services under the St. Theresa Point Health Authority. He and his boss were participating in the Mental Health First Aid program in order to learn some tools that could hopefully save the lives of some of the more troubled residents in their community of St. Theresa Point, Manitoba.

For Mr. Harper, the necessity to implement mental health programs within northern communities is not only a distant hope, it is personal and necessary. His own story was the catalyst to his newfound passion, as he articulated with great bravery to the entire class his descent from his position as the community's constable to being homeless in Winnipeg streets for 17 months.

While his wife was sick in a Winnipeg hospital, Mr. Harper had to quit his station in St. Theresa Point in order to be closer to his wife. However, as his funds to remain in the city quickly dwindled, he had no choice but to live on the streets until his wife was well enough to return to their home.

Upon return to their community, Mr. Harper found himself jobless, hopeless and depressed. As most northern communities can attest to, their remote and isolated locations and the lack of resources provided by the government,contribute to near non-existent counsel and therapy. Self-medication in the form of drugs and alcohol is rampant among several northern aboriginal communities, and Mr. Harper pointed out an obvious need for greater mental health education not only within these communities, but also within Canada, to detail the traumatized psychological plight of the Aboriginal people.

His own current education within mental health awareness programs is a means of propelling the message throughout various government agencies that the rate of drugs and alcohol in St. Theresa Point, and among similar remote northern communities, is the backlash of undiagnosed and untreated mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety resulting from the legacy of the residential school system implemented in 1870 until 1998.

Needless to say, in a society where mental health awareness scores low in the eyes of governmental agencies, leaving its sufferers feeling lonely, dejected and most often scorned by a health care system that ignores very real signs and symptoms of mental illness, aboriginal people have an even greater trial ahead coaxing the provision of mental health services in remote communities and/or the training of its community residents to respond to crisis situations.

The stigma for aboriginal people is greater as they must not only eradicate the notion that mental illness is a figment of the imagination, but in the case of drug and alcohol abuse, disproving the fallacy that this is a way of life rather than a mental illness that leads to suicide -- this sad outcome must begin to move the hearts of Canadian society to work towards achieving common outcomes for all those suffering from mental illness rather than focus on racial scorn and the concept of merit.

I have made it no secret that I am an advocate for the rights of indigenous people. But breaking down the stigma of mental illness is key for healing.

In aboriginal communities, mental health treatment is not just a right, but a necessity in order to draw attention to the fact that drug and alcohol abuse are symptoms of a major depression that stems back centuries, propelled forward by the lingering toxins of the residential school system. If society as a whole began to think of mental illness as a real and deadly force, greater action would be taken in treating it.

Perhaps if the rate of suicide among Canadians of non-aboriginal descent were as elevated as those of aboriginal people, action would be taken to implement serious treatment within the healthcare system?

Sadly though, the suicide rate among indigenous people is staggering, yet progress in implementing programs and acknowledging that the stigma in those communities goes beyond denying mental illness as very real is still a battle to be fought.

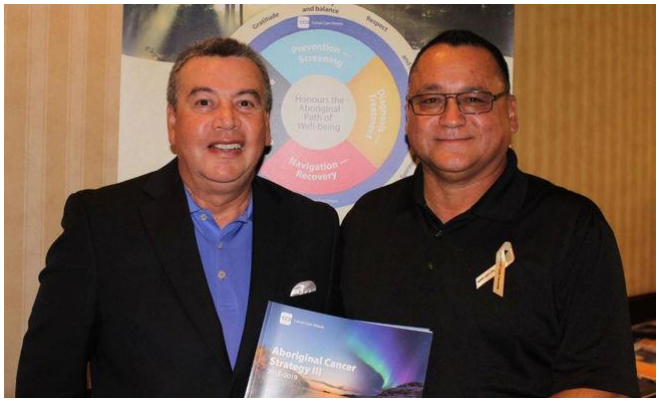
More to the point, drug and alcohol abuse need to be acknowledged as a byproduct of mental illness -- an illness entrenched in aboriginal life due to lingering pain of the residential school system. In order for all of this to occur, there needs to be a national focus on mental health awareness. Only then will eyes be opened not only to our national suicide epidemic, but hopefully to the disregarded suicide rates of the aboriginal people as well.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/sandra-charron/aboriginal-mental-illness-stigma_b_8108012.html

Cancer Care Ontario renews aboriginal strategy

By Bonnie Kogos, Special to Sudbury Star

Sunday, September 13, 2015 1:00:36 EDT PM



Union of Ontario Indians Grand Council Grand Chief Patrick Madahbee and Union of Ontario Indians health policy analyst Tony Jocko display a copy of Cancer Care Ontario's Aboriginal Cancer Strategy 111 in Toronto.

The coincidence and blessings of Northern Ontario caused me to sit next to a bright and charming young fellow, Usman Aslam, on my last Air Canada flight from Sudbury to Toronto. An employee with Cancer Care Ontario, Usman is group manager with the Aboriginal Cancer Control Unit. He was fresh from attending meetings on Manitoulin Island with health professionals.

As a grateful breast cancer survivor for 20 years, I eagerly listened that Cancer Care Ontario renews, this week, its commitment to aboriginal cancer care with the launch of a new three-year plan that will leverage local networks and partnerships to improve health equity.

This comprehensive plan that will guide how the organization works with partners to improve the performance of the cancer system and reduce the burden of cancer for First Nations, Inuit and Metis people from 2015-19.

Inuit and Metis have higher mortality rates from preventable cancers, show higher rates of some modifiable risk factors and tend to present with later-stage cancers at the time of diagnosis.

Aboriginal Cancer Strategy III builds on the progress in the second strategy (2012-15) and focuses on the same six strategic priorities to improve health equity. Cancer Care Ontario works with aboriginal groups to formalize relationships based on trust and mutual respect, and develops data to inform and monitor progress in programming initiatives.

The strategy is to focus on smoking cessation efforts and begin to address other modifiable risk factors. To increase participation in cancer screening across the province. And to offer palliative and end-of-life care.

"Through our work the past 11 years, we've developed a thorough understanding of the unique needs within First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities," Alethea Kewayosh, director of the Aboriginal Cancer Control Unit, told me on the phone. "This plan

demonstrates our unified commitment to staying on the path we've paved together with our partners and building on the success that's already been achieved. Working together, we want to reduce the risk of aboriginal people developing cancer, while improving the quality of life for current and future patients.

"While many successes has been achieved since the launch of the second strategy, one of the most impactful accomplishments has been the creation of an Aboriginal Navigator network across the province," Alethea explained. "Ten Aboriginal Navigator roles have been established to help guide patients through the cancer system and provide personalized support for families and caregivers."

"There is fear associated with health issues and this is related to the increased number of community members who are dying," said Leah Borgstrome, Aboriginal Navigator, Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Program. "This is a double-edged issue because people may decide to ignore their health concerns, afraid they'll learn of bad news."

"I know about that," I said.

"I understand, Bonnie. You've been through it. However, when we're able to provide education regarding the importance of early detection, people begin to understand why ignoring the issue isn't in their best interest."

Funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the strategy was developed jointly by key stakeholders, including aboriginal leadership, healthcare providers, cancer survivors, aboriginal health networks and the Joint Ontario Aboriginal Cancer Committee.

"Part of our government's Patients First strategy is about ensuring that the highest quality care is delivered in a way that puts patients' needs at the centre of everything we do as health care workers," said Dr. Eric Hoskins, minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "The Aboriginal Cancer Strategy is a wonderful example in providing care tailored to the unique circumstances of a community that has traditionally been under-serviced and overburdened with complex health issues."

Over the next four years, Cancer Care Ontario's Regional Cancer Programs will continue to play a key role in supporting the delivery of the program at local levels. Priorities include enhancing community relationships, expanding cancer support services and implementing additional cancer control initiatives.

I tell Usman that I'm privileged to learn and write, for 24 years about my First Nation friends on Manitoulin and in Sudbury --and their accomplishment. Besides bestowing the name of Hummingbird in Ojibwe upon me. One of my columns was included in Trent Prof. Rhonda Paulsen's well-received book, its purpose to assist in revitalizing Indigenous Languages. It is "Spirit of the Island: Manitoulin's People Discuss First-Person Histories on Manitoulin Island in Both English and Ojibway."

Usman knew the book. Prof. Paulsen told me, "Manitoulin is an excellent place to discover the diversity of indigenous languages, and is a microcosm of all the issues that affect aboriginal groups in Canada: I am inspired endlessly."

And Cancer Care Ontario work is so important. I talked to Usman in Toronto, and he introduced me to Tony Jocko, health policy analyst for the Union of Ontario Indians, who tells me "Our First Nations stretch from Lake Nipigon to Sarnia. Bonnie, to learn more go to our website, www. anishinabek.ca." And I do.

The background on this is Cancer Care Ontario's Aboriginal Cancer Strategy, which has identified improvements to palliative and end-of-life care as a key area of focus. The strategic priority includes a goal to expand the availability of pain and symptom management tools for First Nation, Inuit and Metis health-care providers. They also support use of pain any symptom management tools, like the Edmonton Symptom Assessment Scoring system.

The expansion of pain and symptom management tools to remote and settings will be enabled through deployment and integration of a newly developed mobile application that aims to support aboriginals serving community health centres.

I learn about the process flow: the patient completes questions on a tablet and the data is received by the provider, who is able to review the answers or scores via a web-based portal, while the patient is receiving treatment in the cancer centre. This integration to health-care providers through the portal provides access to trends to enable and support integrated, interdisciplinary care and management of cancer clients.

Scores collected in the community setting for clients who are still in active treatment will be made available to cancer centre providers, which will help support coordination across the care continuum.

These benefits that will improve patient experience by empowering cancer patients to better understand and manage their pain and symptoms with support. This improves the delivery of and access to health services and palliative care to Ontario's remote communities, improve health outcomes, coordination of care; and support community-led services.

Providers can track patient symptoms and support integrated care through the provision of patient scores across the entire cancer journey.

Union of Ontario Indians Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee spoke at the launch: "Today marks another milestone in our collective journey to address cancer control for First Nations people. Cancer Care Ontario Aboriginal Cancer Strategy 111 provides an opportunity to reflect on this partnership that we have entered in, and re-affirms our commitment to work together to ensure that our people are not dying prematurely from preventable and treatable cancers."

Wonderful. Stay well. Stay tuned.

Direct Link: http://www.thesudburystar.com/2015/09/13/cancer-care-ontario-renews-aboriginal-strategy

Inuit orgs: suicide prevention means closing the gaps

"It's starts with equality"

JIM BELL, September 14, 2015 - 8:30 am

Scores of Ottawa Inuit and their supporters gathered at Parliament Hill on World Suicide Prevention Day Sept. 10 for a noon-hour celebration of life. (PHOTO BY JIM BELL)

Terry Audla, the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, speaks Sept. 10 at a celebration of life held on Parliament Hill: "We need to close the gaps in early childhood education, culture and language, livelihoods, income distribution, housing, safety and security, education, availability of health services, mental wellness…," Audla said. (PHOTO BY JIM BELL)

Two little throat singers from the Ottawa Inuit Children's Choir perform at a celebration of life held Sept. 10 on Parliament Hill. (PHOTO BY JIM BELL)

OTTAWA — You can't reduce the appalling rates of death by suicide among Inuit without wide-ranging efforts aimed at fixing the social environment in which Inuit live, two Inuit leaders said Sept. 10 at a World Suicide Prevention Day event on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

"We Inuit youth want to see suicide eradicated. We as Inuit youth want a renewed relationship with our country to see a reversal of the grim statistics of suicide among Inuit…," the president of the National Inuit Youth Council, Maatalii Okalik, said in a speech.

"No one individual or government is responsible for suicide prevention. Today's celebration of life event is a reminder of the collaboration that is required in embracing life and preventing suicide," she said.

And Okalik said that Inuit youth are now "becoming more aware of the facts."

"We as Inuit are breaking the barrier of the stigma towards mental health and suicide in our own unique ways," she said.

About 100 Ottawa Inuit, along with friends and supporters, gathered under the noon-hour sun at Parliament Hill for the event, which featured entertainment from Etulu Aningmiuq, Saali Keelan, Nunavut Sivuniksavut and the Ottawa Inuit Children's Choir.

The event also preceded a special two-week inquest into deaths by suicide in Nunavut which is set to start Sept. 14 in Iqaluit.

That inquest, announced by the chief coroner for Nunavut, Padma Suramala, in January 2014, is aimed at exploring the social conditions that lie behind those deaths.

Terry Audla, the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, drew attention to those social conditions in a speech that drew frequent rounds of applause.

"How do we being to reduce the disproportionate rates of suicide among Inuit? It's starts with equality," Audla said.

"We need to close the gaps in early childhood education, culture and language, livelihoods, income distribution, housing, safety and security, education, availability of health services, mental wellness…"

Those things he said, form the "environment" that make up the social determinants of Inuit health.

And that includes fixing what he called the "critical lack of infrastructure in Inuit Nunangat" and ensuring that Inuit gain access to appropriate mental health services.

Statistics for Nunavut released this month by the Nunavut coroner show 486 people have died by suicide in the territory since 1999: 393 males and 93 females. Of those 486 deaths, only seven were non-Inuit.

In 2015, Nunavut has so far suffered 26 deaths by suicide, with six occurring in Iqaluit and three in Baker Lake.

Fourteen other communities have each experienced one or more deaths by suicide this year: Pangnirtung, Clyde River, Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, Hall Beach, Rankin Inlet, Arviat, Whale Cove, Coral Harbour, Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, Taloyoak, Kugaaaruk and Gjoa Haven, the coroner's statistics reveal.

"All Canadians should be appalled by our alarming rates of suicide in Canada and I ask all of you here today to ask more from our governments when it comes to supporting Inuit in building healthier and stronger communities," Audla said, pointing out that suicide is responsible for 40 per cent of deaths among Inuit youth in Canada.

In her speech, Maatalii Okalik said that at last month's general meeting of the NIYC, she asked how many people at the gathering had been affected by suicide.

"Nearly every person raised their hand," she said.

But she said that Inuit are capable of eradicating suicide through individual and collective action.

“We believe in our resiliency. We at the National Inuit Youth Council know that now is the time for Inuit, both young and old, to embrace life together…,” she said.

And she said NIYC will continue to make suicide a priority and “seeks more partnerships with individuals, organizations and governments to address this epidemic.”

Audla also urged Inuit to build resiliency within themselves.

“Remember that you are strong. Celebrate your lives and appreciate what it means to be alive. For those of you who are contemplating suicide, I can only say, there is a tomorrow. Survive and persevere,” he said.

The Sept. 10 celebration was organized by the NIYC and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami with help from Nunavut Sivuniksavut, Tungasuvvingat Inuit, the Pauktuutit national Inuit women’s association and the Ottawa Suicide Prevention Network.

During the event, Audla accepted a $25,000 cheque from the Bell Let’s Talk program to help ITK create a national Inuit suicide prevention strategy.

Audla said it will be an “evidence-informed strategy” guided by ITK’s mental wellness advisory committee, which will work with the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health.

People who struggle with suicidal thoughts may contact the Kamatsiaqtut help line in Iqaluit at (867) 979-3333 or toll-free at 1(800) 265-3333, from 7 p.m. to midnight.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit_orgs_suicide_prevention_means_closing_the_gaps/

Fundraiser aims to send 5 Kimmirut children to see dying father in Ottawa

Iqaluit child donates 2 airline tickets she won in draw to family of Bobby Barrieau

By Natasha MacDonald-Dupuis, CBC News Posted: Sep 15, 2015 10:11 AM CT Last Updated: Sep 15, 2015 12:44 PM CT

Bobby Barrieau, who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer, is in hospital in Ottawa. (submitted by Edward Flynn)

Donations are pouring in to help five children from Kimmirut, Nunavut, travel to see their terminally ill father in Ottawa.

Bobby Barrieau was diagnosed with terminal cancer, and last week his doctors in Ottawa told him he will likely not return home.

His wife, Kitty Arlooktoo Barrieau, is with him in Ottawa but his five children, ages six to 23, are in Kimmirut.

"They really are expressing to me that they want to be with him," she said.

She says time is of the essence.

"In the last week he's gotten quite weak. He's bedridden and hardly has enough energy to talk. He's not quite the Bobby we knew."

Edward Flynn, the principal of Qaqqalik School in Kimmirut and a family friend, launched an online fundraising campaign Sunday to help cover their travel cost. The cost of one regular round-trip ticket from Kimmirut to Ottawa is about $3,500.

The campaign has reached nearly half of its $13,000 goal.

"I received an email from a lady in Iqaluit whose 12-year old daughter won two return tickets from Iqaluit to Ottawa through the Rotary Club," he said.

"She donated the tickets to the Barrieau children. I just thought that was just unbelievable for this child to do something like this."

Barrieau's wife says she is thankful for the help.

"As difficult as it is for me, for us, I am out of words. I am so grateful for all the support," said Arlooktoo Barrieau.

She is also in the process of applying to the Qikiqtani Inuit Association's compassionate travel program, which grants two airline tickets to family members of terminally ill patients.

The program is funded by Nunavut Tunngavik but administered by regional Inuit associations.

"As soon as we receive the application form, it is reviewed immediately and preferably approved in the same day. In those situations, time is usually critical," said Navarana Beveridge, executive director of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association.

"Unfortunately we only have funds for two tickets per family. All the other costs, hotel, meals, are the responsibility of the family."

In 2014, 64 people used the compassionate travel program in the Qikiqtani region alone.

Flynn says he hopes to be able to send the Barrieau children to Ottawa by Monday.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/fundraiser-aims-to-send-5-kimmirut-children-to-see-dying-father-in-ottawa-1.3228859

Nunavut suicide inquest: Inuit-specific programs needed, say witnesses

Psychiatrist says many Inuit don't seek formal mental health care because of historical trauma

By Elyse Skura, CBC News Posted: Sep 17, 2015 6:01 AM CT Last Updated: Sep 17, 2015 8:41 AM CT

Dr. Allison Crawford, a psychiatrist who has worked with Nunavut's mental health system for the past decade, says mental health programs are improving, but several key areas need to be improved. (Sima Sahar Zerehi/CBC)

An expert with a decade of experience working in the Nunavut mental health system and an elder tasked with safeguarding traditional knowledge are both calling for culturally-appropriate suicide prevention programs.

"It should feel safe to come for health care," said Dr. Allison Crawford, a psychiatrist who has worked in several Nunavut communities.

She testified Wednesday at a coroner's inquest into the territory's high rate of suicides being held in Iqaluit at the Nunavut Court of Justice.

She says many Inuit don't like to seek treatment as part of the formal health care system because of historical trauma.

"It's a real limitation that I think everyone recognizes."

But, over the past decade, Crawford says mental health programs in Nunavut have improved.

Jack Hicks has testified that Nunavut did not hire its first Director of Mental Health and Addictions until after work on the suicide prevention strategy began in 2008.

Now, Crawford says the government has made a commitment to have a mental health nurse in every Nunavut community and people who work in different communities are meeting regularly to share their knowledge.

Childhood abuse 'still present and prevalent'

"I don't think suicide was talked about as much or as openly [10 years ago]," testified Crawford. "That's really improved."

But Crawford says the same cannot be said for another pressing issue.

A coroner's inquest into the territory's high rate of suicides is being held in Iqaluit at the Nunavut Court of Justice.

"The degree of childhood abuse is something that I think is even talked about less than suicide," she said.

"It's still present and prevalent in communities."

Reducing the stigma surrounding talking about abuse — and particularly sexual abuse — would help people encourage Inuit to seek counselling and prevent suicide, she said.

"We need to start doing some long-term thinking and prevention around children," Crawford said.

While the expert witness said she was hesitant to "place more responsibility on teachers," she said that children should be taught basic social coping skills when they are young.

"We have to support healthy families."

Families 'waiting to talk'

Crawford also noted the importance of 'postvention' activities, where mental health workers provide counselling and mental health support to family members who have lost loved ones to suicide.

"I'm not aware of any formal mechanism to provide ongoing support."

Since the beginning of the inquest, this has been a recurring suggestion.

Joanasie Akumalik, whose son Clyde died by suicide in 2013, testified that he and his family — including Clyde's twin brother — received no formal counselling as part of the territory's mental health system.

Jack Hicks, the inquest's first expert witness, testified that he had interviewed loved ones of 120 Inuit who died by suicide as part of a major research project.

"Most families were more than happy to talk," Hicks said Tuesday. "Some families were waiting to talk."

On Wednesday, Crawford said that postvention can be challenging since the decision to come for counselling needs to come from the person who is struggling and, in most cases, cannot be forced on them by the health system.

However, when it's felt that someone is at a serious risk to harm themselves, they can be "certified" — detained by medical staff involuntarily under the Mental Health Act.

Once, Crawford testified that she "had no choice" but to certify a 12-year-old because she feared for his life.

Due to a lack of "secure physical spaces" at the community's health centre, the boy had to be held overnight in an RCMP cell.

"It's in the interest of their safety," she said, "but it has other consequences."

'I was shocked'

Shuvinai Mike, director of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (traditional knowledge) with Nunavut's Department of Culture and Heritage, shed light on the need to understand Inuit culture in her testimony Wednesday afternoon.

"Whoever is leading the strategy, I think we need to work together," she testified. "We need for them to utilize our elders."

Mike's testimony became emotional as she discussed losing her daughter.

"When I asked for a copy of my late daughter's coroner's report, I was shocked to learn that my daughter had gone to the hospital many times," she said.

"If I had been informed of this, I definitely would have intervened and sought help with her.

"[If I had], she may still be alive and be here with her kids."

If you are feeling suicidal you can call the Kamatsiaqtut Help Line. It is anonymous and confidential: (867) 979-3333 or (800) 265-3333. You can also call the Kids Help Phone to speak to a counsellor: 1-800-668-6868.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-suicide-inquest-inuit-specific-programs-needed-say-witnesses-1.3231406

What the Inuit can tell us about omega-3 fats and 'paleo' diets

By Robert Sanders | September 17, 2015

The traditional diet of Greenland natives – the Inuit – is held up as an example of how high levels of omega-3 fatty acids can counterbalance the bad health effects of a high-fat diet, but a new study hints that what's true for the Inuit may not be true for everyone else.

A village on the coast of Greenland, where the native Inuit population traditionally ate diets high in omega-3 fats. Over thousands of years, they developed genetic mutations that allowed them to remain healthy despite the fatty died, but this adaptation had other consequences, such as short height. Malik Milfeldt photo.

The study, which appears in the Sept. 18 issue of the journal *Science*, shows that the Inuit and their Siberian ancestors have special mutations in genes involved in fat metabolism. The mutations help them partly counteract the effects of a diet high in marine mammal fat, mostly from seals and whales that eat fish with high levels of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids.

Those genetic mutations, found in nearly 100 percent of the Inuit, are found in a mere 2 percent of Europeans and 15 percent of Han Chinese, which means that these groups would synthesize omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids differently from the Inuit.

"The original focus on fish oil and omega-3s came from studies of Inuit. On their traditional diet, rich in fat from marine mammals, Inuit seemed quite healthy with a low incidence of cardiovascular disease, so fish oil must be protective," said project leader Rasmus Nielsen, a UC Berkeley professor of integrative biology. "We've now found that they have unique genetic adaptations to this diet, so you cannot extrapolate from them to other populations. A diet that is healthy for the Inuit may not necessarily be good for the rest of us."

These genetic mutations in the Inuit have more widespread effects. They lower "bad" LDL cholesterol and fasting insulin levels, presumably protecting against cardiovascular disease and diabetes. They also have a significant effect on height, because growth is in part regulated by a person's fatty acid profile. The researchers found that the mutations causing shorter height in the Inuit are also associated with shorter height in Europeans.

"The mutations we found in the Inuit have profound physiological effects, changing the whole profile of fatty acids in the body, plus it reduces their height by 2 centimeters: nearly an inch," said Ida Moltke, a University of Copenhagen associate professor of bioinformatics who is joint first author on the study. "Height is controlled by many genes, but this mutation has one of the strongest effects on height ever found by geneticists."

Personalized diets

Nielsen noted that this is some of the clearest evidence to date that human populations are actually adapted to particular diets; that is, they differ in the way they physiologically respond to diets. Just as genome sequencing can lead to personalized medicine tailored to an individual's specific set of genes, so too may a person's genome dictate a personalized diet.

Seals and walruses were part of the traditional diet of the Inuit, as seen in this illustration of a native village on Canada's Baffin Island, from the book Arctic Researches and Life Among the Esquimaux (1865) by Charles Francis Hall.

"People ask themselves whether they should be on a stone-age diet, for example. The response may well depend on their genome," Nielsen said.

Nielsen and his colleagues at UC Berkeley and in Greenland and Denmark came to their conclusions after analyzing the genomes of 191 Greenlanders with a low admixture of European genes (less than 5 percent) and comparing them to the genomes of 60 Europeans and 44 Han Chinese. They looked for mutations occurring in a large percentage of Inuit individuals but in few or no other groups, which indicates that the mutation spread throughout the Inuit because it was somehow useful to their survival while not essential in other groups.

One cluster of mutations – in genes that code for enzymes that desaturate carbon-carbon bonds in fatty acids – stood out strongly, said Anders Albrechtsen, an associate professor of bioinformatics at the University of Copenhagen and a joint project leader. Fatty acids

are the fat in our diet, and occur in saturated, polyunsaturated and unsaturated forms, depending on whether the molecules' carbon atoms are linked together with no, some or all double bonds. Saturated fats are considered bad because they raise levels of cholesterol and low-density lipoproteins (LDL) in the blood and lower the "good" high-density lipoproteins (HDL), all of which lead to plaque formation and clogged arteries. Diets rich in polyunsaturated and unsaturated fats are linked to lower heart disease. Desaturase enzymes convert dietary fatty acids into fatty acids stored and metabolized by the body.

The mutations common in the Inuit, once known as Eskimos, decrease the production of both omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids, presumably to account for the high amount of these fatty acids coming from the diet. Changing production of one fatty acid affects all fatty acids, however, since they regulate one another in a complex way, Albrechtsen said.

Thus, while it's not clear which specific gene or genes within the cluster is responsible for the alteration in fatty acid metabolism, he said that "when you change the genes that are involved in fatty acid synthesis, you change the whole conversation among fatty acids, and that has a lot of downstream effects."

Adaptation to ice age living

The mutations seem to be at least 20,000 years old, and may have helped many groups of humans adapt to high-meat, high-fat, hunter-gatherer diets from large land and marine mammals high in certain types of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, said Matteo Fumagalli, a researcher at University College London, who is joint first author of the study. They may have arisen among the original Siberians, who have lived in the Arctic for more than 20,000 years, and arrived in Greenland when Inuit settled there about 1,000 years ago.

"We think it is a quite old selection that may have helped humans adapt to the environment during the last ice age, but the selection is far stronger in the Inuit than anywhere else," said Fumagalli. "It's fascinating that Greenlanders have a unique genetic makeup that lets them better use their traditional food sources."

The researchers discovered another common mutation in a gene that is involved in the differentiation of brown, subcutaneous fat cells and brite fat cells, the latter of which generate heat. This may also have helped the Inuit adapt to a cold environment.

Nielsen and his colleagues worked with blood samples obtained by the National Institute of Public Health in Denmark and the Steno Diabetes Center with express written consent of Inuit individuals. The team also included a group of Danish metabolism researchers led by professors Torben Hansen at University of Copenhagen, Marit Jørgensen, Steno Diabetes Center, and Peter Bjerregaard, National Institute of Public Health, University of Southern Denmark.

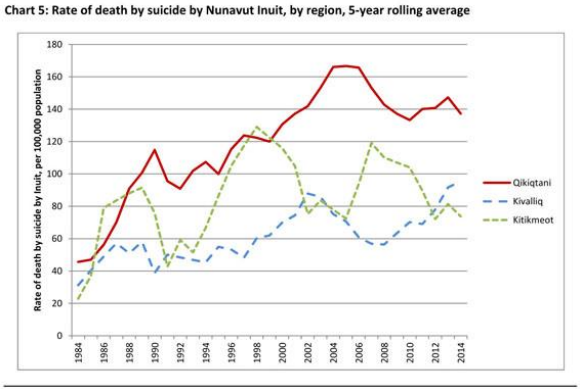
The work was supported by numerous institutions, including the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the Danish Council for Independent Research and the Steno Diabetes Center.

Direct Link: http://news.berkeley.edu/2015/09/17/what-the-inuit-can-tell-us-about-omega-3-fats-and-paleo-diets/

Witness says Nunavut government deleted budget from its suicide plan

"We had an implementation plan without a budget," Jack Hicks says

THOMAS ROHNER, September 16, 2015 - 4:47 pm



This chart shows that the Qikiqtani region suffers the highest rates of suicide in Nunavut, by a wide margin. Statistician Jack Hicks said he believes that may be because the people of the Qikiqtani suffered more trauma than others during the transitional years of the 1950s and 1960s and now suffers from a greater degree of inter-generational trauma.

A recent evaluation of Nunavut's suicide prevention action plan shows the Government of Nunavut's "uneven participation" in the group that created it and properly questions the GN's leadership in implementing it.

That's according to Jack Hicks, a suicide statistician who testified Sept. 16 at the coroner's inquest into Nunavut's high suicide rates at the Nunavut Court of Justice in Iqaluit.

An evaluation of the plan was submitted as evidence on Sept. 15, the second day of the inquest.

"The problem is not the strategy, the problem is the implementation of that strategy," Hicks told the inquest's six-person jury.

The GN needs to adequately fund its part of the action plan, said Hicks, who was involved in coming up with both the strategy and its attached action plan.

“It’s hard to imagine suicide prevention is a priority [for the GN], not in terms of what it says, but in terms of how it’s acting.”

Hicks’ testimony came on the third day of the discretionary coroner’s inquest.

At the end of the two-week inquest, a jury will be asked for recommendations on how to curb Nunavut’s sky-high suicide rates.

On Sept. 14, a representative from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Natan Obed, said the GN is “at least partly to blame” for the failed suicide prevention plan.

“The GN needs to decide if it wants be part of the partnership,” Obed said.

That partnership, between the GN, NTI, the Embrace Life Council and the Nunavut RCMP, released a suicide prevention strategy in 2010, and an action plan for the strategy in 2011.

But a backroom decision made between senior officials in the GN and NTI removed a crucial element of that action plan, Hicks said Sept. 16.

The draft action plan included a column titled “resources required,” Hicks testified, attaching dollar amounts to each action plan item.

The plan “disappeared inside the GN,” for a while and when it was released to the public, the “resources required” column had been removed without consultation with the working partnership, Hicks said.

“That meant we had an implementation plan without a budget,” he said.

An email obtained through an access to information request, and shared with Nunatsiaq News, shows the decision to remove the budget was made by Peter Ma, then the deputy minister of health, and the executive director of NTI in 2011, Terry Audla.

The burden of implementing the plan falls heavily on the GN’s shoulders, Hicks admitted—something all members of the partnership recognized throughout the process.

But Hicks, who has spent about 15 years studying suicides, especially in the circumpolar world, said he is unaware of any successful suicide prevention plan where public authorities responsible for health care, social services and education haven’t stepped up to the plate.

The first portion of Hicks’ testimony focused on his work collecting Nunavut-specific suicide statistics for NTI, which the Inuit organization released online Sept. 16.

One major weakness of Nunavut’s efforts to curb suicide rates is that no data exists on attempted suicides in the territory, Hicks said.

The GN has twice publicly committed to collecting that data, but has so far failed to do so, he said.

That data would help researchers and policy-makers better understand what leads people to form suicidal thoughts, Hicks said.

The statistics Hicks compiled in his study paint a picture that many in Nunavut are all too familiar with.

The average rate of suicide among Inuit in Nunavut is just under 10 times the national average, Hicks testified.

The frequency of deaths in Nunavut by suicide first spiked in the late 1970s and early 80s, then again in the late 90s and early 2000s, Hicks said.

"Basically, very few populations in the world have ever experienced anything like that increase."

But very few modern societies have experienced the intergenerational historical trauma that Inuit society has experienced in recent decades, the researcher said.

And it's that trauma that Hicks believes is at the root of Nunavut's suicide problem.

Suicide rates across Nunavut vary by region, for example, with the highest rates recorded in the Qikiqtani region.

"The core of my hypothesis is that the process by which Inuit in the Qikiqtani region were coerced into communities for various reasons was more traumatic to the families than was the case by and large on the mainland."

This theory challenges a misconception some have about Nunavut's high suicide rates, Hicks added, namely that the problem is specific to Inuit.

Instead, any population in the world who've experienced that kind of trauma would have a similarly high rate of suicide, Hicks said.

Witnesses from the Nunavut health department are expected to testify Sept. 17, with witnesses from other departments and Inuit organizations slated to appear before Sept. 24, when the jury will begin deliberations on their recommendations.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674witness_says_nunavut_government_deleted_budget_from_its_suicide_plan/

Shoal Lake 40 First Nation part of world-wide health study destined for United Nations

National News | September 16, 2015 by Julien Gignac

Julien Gignac
APTN National News
A non-governmental organization has initiated a water-related study about Shoal Lake 40 First Nation as part of a world-wide investigation into healthy communities.

“It’s part of a broader research project on the rights to water and sanitation in First Nations communities in Ontario,” said Amanda Klasing, senior researcher for Human Rights Watch. “As we were mapping out and thinking about countries that have particular human rights issues related to water and sanitation, Canada came up consistently.”

Shoal Lake 40 has made news for the past year because of its dire situation. The community straddles the Ontario, Manitoba border and has been under a boil water advisory for the past 17 years.

For more than a century, the First Nation, which supplies the city of Winnipeg with drinking water, has strived to survive without the luxury of a road connecting it to the mainland. Members have resorted to crossing the body of water by boat, by foot during the winter. Nine people have perished due to unstable ice.

Because the band doesn’t have the capacity to filter its own water, it uses pump houses with chlorination systems in place.

Klasing is investigating the potential health risks associated with these circumstances.

The findings of the report will be sent to the United Nations in February, she said.

Shoal Lake's situation has made headway since the latest rounds of media exposure.

Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger confirmed Saturday that the province will chip in $10-million towards the cost of building what is being called, Freedom Road, a bridge that will link the community to the mainland.

The city of Winnipeg is also offering $10-million.

The project is likely to cost $30-million.

Selinger announced that he will put the required funds in the budget, as per the demands raised by community, he said.

"A lot of Manitobans feel that we've been drawing clean water from that area for nearly a hundred years and it's only right that this community get access to a road, which will then facilitate them having clean water facilities so they can have the same quality of resources that the rest of us are enjoying," said Selinger. "It's a question of basic fairness, and we support that view and are trying to contribute to a positive solution."

Selinger told APTN that Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne also expressed interest in being part of the solution.

"The bottom line is everybody's taking a positive attitude on trying to resolve this issue," he said.

The federal Conservatives are promising $1-million for a design plan.

The construction of "Freedom Road" has been a talking point during the election, however, with Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair acknowledging the outstanding funds for the road's construction and offering assistance if deemed prime minister.

This is not an election issue, nor a political one, according to Chief Erwin Redsky.

"It's basic survival for my community and we have to work with whoever's in power," he said. "We're willing to work with the current sitting conservatives and we're going to work with the next government after the election."

It is not simply another road project, said Redsky, but assurance of the overall health and safety of the community.

"It's everything. It's a lifeline that's been missing for the past hundred years," he said. "The federal government is front and centre. They created the problem, they need to be front and centre in the solution."

Direct Link: http://aptn.ca/news/2015/09/16/shoal-lake-40-first-nation-part-of-world-wide-health-study-destined-for-united-nations/

Aboriginal History

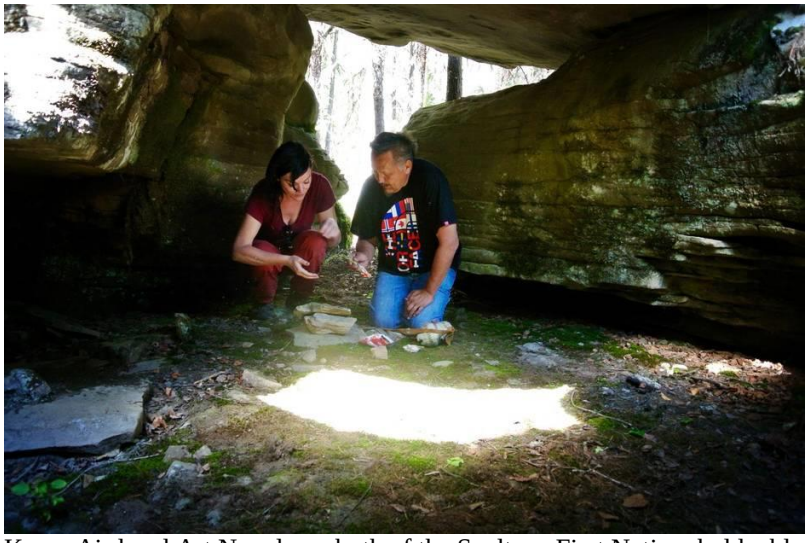
Researchers, First Nations search for clues inside remote cave in northeastern B.C.

Mark Hume

TUMBLER RIDGE, B.C. — The Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Sep. 11, 2015 7:27PM EDT

Last updated Friday, Sep. 11, 2015 7:32PM EDT



Karen Aird and Art Napoleon, both of the Saulteau First Nation, hold a blessing ceremony in a rock shelter discovered near Tumbler Ridge, B.C. (Mark Hume/The Globe and Mail)

A cave of mysteries

Researchers have discovered what appears to be a significant historic cave near Tumbler Ridge, B.C. But as **Mark Hume** reports, they still don't know who made it, when it was built — or why

When Charles Helm saw the blue bones under the rock overhang, he knew that he had found something special.

But that find, made last fall by a family doctor who is British Columbia's real-life version of Indiana Jones, turned out to just be the first of several discoveries – including an ancient stone shelter – that are now drawing the interest of geologists and archeologists to a remote river valley in the eastern foothills of the Rockies.

"Bones turn this remarkable blue colour when they are burned," Dr. Helm said in an interview as he raced down the Murray River recently in a jet boat. "Yes, they could have been from an animal that got caught there during a forest fire, but I think that's a remote possibility. The most likely explanation is that they were burned there in a campfire by early people."

As he spoke, pilot Randy Gulick slid his boat at high speed around a rock bluff and plunged deep into the Murray River Canyon, where a dramatic landscape is revealing some tantalizing prehistoric clues. Along on the expedition were research scientists and First Nations representatives who over the years have learned that when Dr. Helm gets excited about a find, it's usually for good reason.

Originally from Cape Town, South Africa, Dr. Helm and his wife, Linda, moved to Tumbler Ridge in 1992. Since then, he has made a name for himself by finding, and helping build trails to, ancient fossil beds and dinosaur footprints.

In 2000, his son Daniel, then 8, and a friend, Mark Turner, then 11, discovered a dinosaur trackway that featured a series of prints left by ankylosauruses, armoured dinosaurs that lived in the area 96 million years ago.

Dr. Helm, who in 2011 won an award from the B.C. Paleontological Alliance "for outstanding contributions by an amateur to the science of paleontology," spearheaded a campaign that last fall saw Tumbler Ridge named a UNESCO Global Geopark, an area recognized by the United Nations as having geological features of international significance.

A small stack of rocks was found carefully placed inside an ancient rock shelter. (Mark Hume/The Globe and Mail)

That designation was made before he stumbled on his latest finds – discoveries that he says have astonished him.

One day last year, Dr. Helm was out rambling along a ridge high above the Murray River. “My wife kept saying, ‘I want to go down to the river.’ In the process, we found this rock overhang with blue bones in it,” he said. “Then we looked across the river and saw this remarkable geological feature and, of course, we had to explore.”

He swam across the river, hiked up to the top of a cliff and stopped in his tracks. “We found these columns, amazing rock formations, and then I found this series of potholes. What are potholes doing 200 feet above the river? This is so amazing and weird … it’s just so bizarre. You don’t have anything like it in this region,” he said. Some of the potholes were full of rainwater, others with a profusion of plants.

Dr. Helm later returned with Karen Aird, a cultural heritage adviser for the Treaty 8 Tribal Association, Jonathan Driver, vice-president of Simon Fraser University whose research includes digs at a B.C. cave where human use dates back 11,000 years, and Rémi Farvacque, director of Archer CRM Partnership, a consulting firm based in northern B.C. that does archeological research.

The group was impressed by the rock overhang with the burned bones and by the potholes, an unusual geological formation created by flowing water. Near a stone pillar that would have made an ideal lookout for ancient hunters, they found a small black flake – a chip that Mr. Farvacque said was created when someone “knapped” or chipped at a piece of stone to make a tool or arrowhead.

Then Mr. Farvacque broke away from the group to have a smoke – and let out a yell. There carved out of the rock face by natural forces was an hourglass-shaped opening, and inside was an almost perfectly round grotto. Forming a roof was a huge flat slab of stone that left a small, crescent shaped opening through which a beam of sunlight poured. And on the floor, directly in line with the advancing shaft of light, were three carefully placed rocks that formed a rough pyramid-like structure a little more than a metre high.

“We’d never seen anything like this before,” Dr. Helm said of the shelter, which has smooth, curved walls. “And right in the middle there are those three rocks piled on top of one another. That’s when you get the shivers down the spine, realizing there were people here before. There’s this amazing connection with deep time.”

Sign of early people. Archeologists found a tiny chip of black stone, possibly thousands of years old, that was left by someone creating a stone tool. (Mark Hume/The Globe and Mail)

On the return visit with Dr. Helm, Mr. Farvacque said he is not sure what to make of the rock shelter and its small, carefully placed cairn. He agreed that it is an extremely unusual geological formation, the likes of which he has never encountered before, and that it has been used by humans.

But when and how remain mysteries. “I’m very conservative in my assessment. They [the stacked rocks] were here when we found the structure. But whether they were put here by a trapper 50 years ago, or by someone 300 or 10,000 years ago, we don’t know,” he said.

Ms. Aird said archeological research will be needed to determine how the site was used, but her theory is it was a place used for ceremonies by early people “This is really a sacred site,” she said as she sat in the small cave. “You can sense that.”

Art Napoleon, a former chief of the Saulteau First Nation and a cultural adviser, agreed. “It’s fascinating. I’d like to know more. I know where I’d start,” he said, nodding to a place in the cave where it would have been natural to build a fire.

There were no apparent markings on the shelter’s walls, but Mr. Napoleon said that if it was used spiritually, it might not have been carved or painted, nor would there be animal bones if it was a place for fasting.

Mr. Farvacque said the shelter sits in the middle of what was probably an area of high use but not high occupancy by early peoples, meaning that it was probably used by travelling hunters and was not a permanent camp.

If an archeological dig is done, he said, it should start well outside the shelter’s entrance and work carefully in. “We just don’t have sites like this, so you want to be very cautious,” he said.

Marten Geertsema, adjunct professor at University of Northern British Columbia and an expert on terrain analysis, said the potholes and the rock columns carved in the nearby cliff face were probably formed by a catastrophic flood, when a glacial lake released a vast volume of water.

“It’s special stuff,” he said of the formations.

Across North America, pothole sites are rare and are usually protected as parks or reserves.

Dr. Driver was not on the most recent visit to the site, but he said it’s a fascinating area that deserves more archeological and geological study.

“It’s a pretty neat place. I think it’s the sort of place one would want to do some very careful exploration to determine if it had been used by earlier people,” he said. “When I looked at those [stacked rocks], there was nothing there to suggest they had been there a long time, but on the other hand that doesn’t mean they couldn’t have been placed there a long time ago.”

Archeologists investigating a find in the Murray River Canyon accessed the remote area by jet boat. (Mark Hume/The Globe and Mail)

Dr. Driver said it is very difficult just from looking at a site to determine its age and how it was used. That kind of information can be stitched together only by methodical scientific research.

But he said the mysterious rock shelter, the rock overhang with burned bones and the surrounding potholes in the Murray River Canyon are definitely worthy of study.

“If I wasn’t [busy as] the vice-president of my university, I would be very interested in that as a research area,” he said. “There are some very interesting landscape features there which I suspect would have attracted [early] First Nations people for resource gathering and potentially for spiritual activity.”

He said First Nations and government approval would be needed before any scientific work could take place.

Ms. Aird said she plans to take it up with the Treaty 8 leaders and if they agree, she would look for a university or other institution to partner with on an archeological dig.

Dr. Helm said he would like to see the public get access to the remote location. “If Treaty 8 want us to build a trail [to allow public access], we will. But if they feel it’s such a spiritual place we shouldn’t, we won’t,” he said.

Direct Link: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/tumbler-ridge-cave/article26341021/

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Aboriginal women's rise brings power to much-needed voices

'Fortunately, I believe that most of the men who inflict this violence want help so they can change'

By Don Marks, for CBC News Posted: Sep 11, 2015 7:14 PM CT Last Updated: Sep 11, 2015 7:14 PM CT

Sheila North Wilson became the first grand chief of MKO this month. Don Marks points to her as one of the leaders to watch. (Submitted by Sheila North Wilson)

We try not be sexist, but history tells us women have been more prone to peace and nurturing, while men have been more apt to engage in war and and the destruction it creates.

Women are the life givers. They carry the water.

For the past century, First Nations politics has been dominated by men, but things are changing.

Female indigenous leaders like Marion Ironquil Meadmore, Mary Richard, Diane Redsky, Leslie Spillett, Sharon Redsky, Nahanni Fontaine, Josie Hill ... I have to stop here because the hundreds of names I could add would take all of my space ... have been driving forces behind the positive changes that have been made in the social and economic development of First Nations.

The point is, we welcome the new approach that comes with the election of Sheila North Wilson as grand chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, the first woman to be elected grand chief of MKO since it was established in 1981.

North Wilson is well versed in the major pressing issues of infrastructure needs, hydro development, mining and other priorities facing northern First Nations communities. She will carry the case well.

Every 20 minutes in this "modern" country, a woman is slapped in the face, punched or kicked, stabbed or shot. - *Don Marks*

At the same time, North Wilson is going to bring a perspective backed by political clout to a major tragedy that plagues our country.

Every 20 minutes in Canada, a woman becomes the victim of domestic violence.

Let's rephrase that.

Every 20 minutes in this "modern" country, a woman is slapped in the face, punched or kicked, stabbed or shot. More than 1,200 aboriginal women are missing or murdered.

And every time this happens, good men get angry because they can't stand to see their mothers and sisters and aunts treated this way, and they want to punch the living daylights out of these men but that usually only makes it worse for the woman.

Most men cannot comprehend what it's like to be unable to fight back or defend yourself in any way. And most men in their right minds would never put a woman in that kind of situation.

Women want these violent men to get counselling; to find out why they think it is their duty or their right to whack a woman with a frying pan because they didn't make the eggs right one morning.

Meanspirited men must suffer the consequences of their actions. Perpetrators cannot be allowed to move from one relationship to another, inflicting violence on victim after victim, including children who have to suffer the horror of seeing their most beloved guide through life be bruised and bled and battered in front of their eyes.

No doubt women must be protected, but this isn't something that can be solved by "locking people up and throwing away the key."

There are so many men who are victims themselves and may be helped with some patience and love and professional care. Many of these men themselves suffered abuse that has caused them to lash out.

There is a lot of work to do

Sheila North Wilson does not have to be a victim of violence to be able to relate to a woman who is. She can rely on experts like Manitoba advisor on aboriginal women Nahanni Fontaine and Manitoba Muslim leader Shahina Siddiqui (who supplied the statistic on how often women are abused). These brilliant, educated experts will help MKO and all First Nations people deal with this situation, which has nonaboriginal and aboriginal men inflicting enormous pain on indigenous women.

When anyone imagines a fellow human not able to find safety in her own home, worried about being woken up at 3 a.m. and being bounced off walls by fists of fury, or out on the streets living in vulnerable situations that arose out of a dysfunctional background nobody would choose we all know these missing and murdered women are a national priority for all Canadians.

There is no validation for the guy who tells a judge "she just wouldn't listen" in court.

Fortunately, I believe that most of the men who inflict this violence want help so they can change.

And most other men want them to change.

Let us never forget the sacrifice that good, ordinary men, plumbers, school teachers, insurance salesmen, doctors and lawyers made when they laid down their lives to defeat mass murderers like Adolf Hitler.

Moms and dads both have roles to play in the home and in community leadership. We just haven't had enough female hearts and minds represented in in our political processes.

Lead the way, Sheila!

Don Marks is a Winnipeg writer.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/aboriginal-women-s-rise-brings-power-to-much-needed-voices-1.3225543

Acadian Singer Natasha St-Pier Criticized over Depiction of First Nations Culture

By Alex Hudson
Published Sep 15, 2015

Earlier this month, New Brunswick singer Natasha St-Pier celebrated her Acadian background by releasing a video for her song "Tous les Acadiens." But she has since incurred criticism for the clip, with detractors saying that it relies on stereotypes about First Nations and Acadian cultures.

The clip for the countrified, clap-along tune shows St-Pier wearing a headdress while surrounded by similarly dressed children. Other scenes show a birch canoe, dreamcatchers and a teepee.

CBC points out that Société nationale de l'Acadie president René Cormier has criticized the video, saying, "Despite all the efforts we do, we continue to convey these kind of clichés."

Another Acadian musician from New Brunswick, Julie Aubé of Les Hay Babies, similarly targeted the video, saying, "In the last 10 years, we've made so much progress showing to the world what a modern Acadie looks like. We're not all dressed like La Sagouine, playing spoons and dancing in open fields like it's still 1800. Thank God for the numerous Acadian bands that had the guts to tour across the world and defend their French dialect, and explain why there's still French people in New Brunswick."

"Tous les Acadiens" comes from St-Pier's new album, *Mon Acadie*, which is due out on October 2 through Smart. On the album cover, she is depicted wearing a headdress, and Facebook commenters have accused her of relying on stereotypes and appropriating First Nations culture.

On the other hand, St-Pier's collaborator (an Acadian peer Édith Butler) told the CBC, "It is so wonderful and so beautiful, we should congratulate her."

That's the album cover above. Watch the controversial video for "Tous les Acadiens" below.

Direct Link: http://exclaim.ca/music/article/acadian_singer_natasha_st-pier_criticized_over_depiction_of_first_nations_culture

Two Story Café explores Métis identity

Kristen McEwen
Published on September 17, 2015

This year's Two Story Café is focusing on history, identity and place -- specifically Métis identity.

Performance artist David Garneau holds up For Rent signs declaring kids are welcome but clowns are not within the city of Prince Albert during his performance at the IPAC Two Story Café on Wednesday.

On Wednesday evening, a crowd gathered at the Mann Art Gallery to watch performance artist David Garneau and listen award-winning fiddler Tristen Derocher

Indigenous Peoples Artist Collective (IPAC) artistic director Michel Boutin explained that Garneau's performance was about Métis identity.

"There's a lot of debate around who is, or what does constitute a Métis nation or 'Métis-ness,'" Boutin said.

He added that Garneau's performance also discussed the connection with Louis Riel and the loss of history and how to unify that history to create a nation.

The Two Story Café started nine years ago when Boutin first moved to Prince Albert.

“I really noticed a lack of understanding, a lack of interest for contemporary indigenous art,” he said. “There’s the powwow, Voices of the North -- all these wonderful things. None of them were taking into account the contemporary indigenous experience, or urban aboriginal experience.”

Boutin wanted people to realize that Saskatchewan is home to many of the world’s top modern indigenous artists.

“I found it was a shame that there wasn’t a centre or something that was making this happen constantly,” he said.

He noted that the First Nations University Arts Department originally began in Prince Albert.

“Within our ranks, we have a lot of people that have emerged as artists … and are now ranked nationally,” Boutin said.

Many of the artists performing at the Two Story Café are recognized at a national and international level.

Part of IPAC’s mandate is to not only bringing aboriginal art to Prince Albert but to create it here and engage with the international arts scene from a local point of view, he added.

Direct Link: http://www.paherald.sk.ca/News/Local/2015-09-17/article-4278838/Two-Story-Cafe-explores-Metis-identity/1

Métis in Gaspé hope DNA tests will grant them more rights

Finding could help community defend hunting rights in court

CBC News Posted: Sep 14, 2015 2:43 PM ET Last Updated: Sep 14, 2015 2:46 PM ET

The annual general assembly of the Metis Community of Gaspé, the Lower Saint Lawrence and Magdalen Islands. (Benoît Lavoie)

New DNA tests show that Métis have been living in the Gaspé region for nearly 2,000 years, a finding that the community hopes will help them in court.

The Métis community in Gaspé, the Lower Saint Lawrence and Magdalen Islands has about 10,000 members who claim to be of both aboriginal and European descent.

At an annual meeting on the weekend, the community association presented new ancestral evidence from genetic tests.

"We did about 20 tests until now, and they all came out positive to show we've been here for 2,000 years," association president Benoît Lavoie said.

Benoît Lavoie, president of the Metis Community of Gaspé, the Lower Saint Lawrence and Magdalen Islands. (Benoît Lavoie)

He said the Association is proceeding carefully to make sure these results are valid. If they are, they could help people of Métis descent defend their legal rights, particularly as it relates to ancestral land — for example, in situations where someone is accused of illegal hunting or fishing.

In such cases, the accused have to defend their cases as individuals. Lavoie said prosecutors could use these new findings in court to have the community's rights recognized.

Lavoie said the association is ready to go to the Supreme Court if necessary.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/dna-tests-metis-in-gaspe-1.3227589

Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

Aboriginal workers underrepresented in Nova Scotia government

Government workforce is comprised of 0.9% Aboriginal people

CBC News Posted: Sep 11, 2015 6:00 AM AT Last Updated: Sep 11, 2015 2:00 PM AT

The number of people employed by the Nova Scotia government is about 10,082. (Jean Laroche/CBC)

The province of Nova Scotia is raising concerns about its own ability to hire aboriginal people, according to an internal government document.

The government workforce is comprised of 0.9 per cent aboriginal people, below the province's goal of about 2.5 per cent.

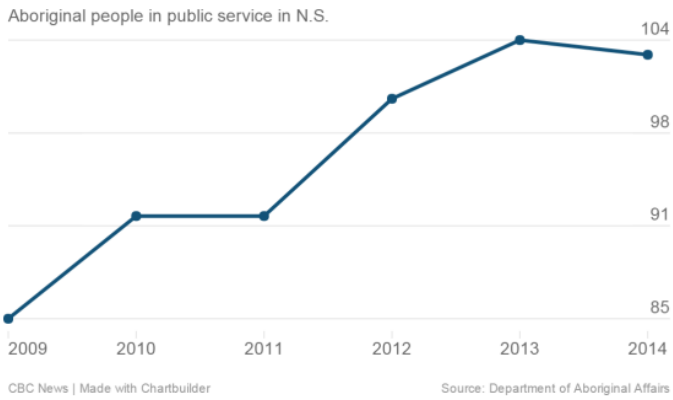
"There are concerns within government that hiring staff are not fully aware of diversity programs offered through the [Public Service Commission], in order for government to achieve its targets for employee equity," reads a ministerial briefing prepared for the aboriginal Affairs Minister and Premier Stephen McNeil.

"That doesn't represent achievement of our employee equity objectives. We are concerned about that and working to improve upon that," says Joe Fraser, director of corporate diversity with the Public Service Commission.

'We're concerned'

The numbers have slightly increased in the past five years, but continues to hover below the one-per-cent mark. In 2009, 85 people who identified as aboriginal worked in the public service. That rose to 103 in 2014.

"We're concerned about the lack of upward trending," said Fraser.



The numbers have slightly increased, but continues to hover below the one per cent mark. (Department of Aboriginal Affairs/CBC)

"As government we are looked to by Nova Scotians to set an example and to lead by example. As one of the biggest employers in the province and also because government has to provide services that are responsive to all Nova Scotians and Nova Scotians have to be able to see themselves in the services we provide."

There are about 10,082 people working for the Nova Scotia government. A 2012-2013 report shows aboriginal people make up 2.4 per cent of the working-age population.

Fraser says the province is investigating how it hires people in hopes of improving the numbers and reviewing potential barriers, like experience and education.

The province adopted an employment equity strategy last year.

Karen Boyd works for the Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat and said she's not surprised at all by the numbers.

She said the province has set goals without connecting with people in the community.

"That is often the case. These plans are made up without engaging the communities they are trying to target. It's just backwards in my opinion because they need our input, they need to understand the issues from our point of view so we can work on that together," Boyd said. "It kind of baffles me."

'We're seeing what works'

She said she's willing to help the Public Service Commission make those connections

"It's important for any workplace to be reflective of the community they work in and for," she said.

At the same time, Boyd said it's a learning process.

"This is all some what new, considering even my father's generation was in residential schools. He was one of the first students to attend the transition year program at Dalhousie University for example. Education and employment weren't open other than to people in my generation now," she said. "We're seeing what works, we're seeing what doesn't work. We're seeing what needs to happen."

According to Fraser, the government is overhauling the way it tracks demographics in the public service. Instead of filling out a survey when they start, civil servants will be polled every few years.

"Based on an early look at those numbers I think that there are promising signs of how that representation is starting to trend," he said.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/aboriginal-workers-underrepresented-in-nova-scotia-government-1.3222854

Nunavik women say family demands keep them from jobs at mines

“They want to make sure that their children are cared for"

SARAH ROGERS, September 17, 2015 - 7:00 am

Siasi Kanarjuak, who works in recruitment at Glencore Raglan, and Cynthia Cookie-Simard, an Inuit employment officer at Canadian Royalties nickel mine, toured the region last winter to hear Inuit women talk about what barriers they face entering the mining workforce. (PHOTO BY SARAH ROGERS)

KUUJJUAQ — Consultations with Inuit women across Nunavik earlier this year found that — not surprisingly — they face the same barriers to seeking and securing employment in the mining sector as other Aboriginal women around the world.

And one of those challenges is balancing work with home and family life in a job that demands that workers be away from home for extended periods of time.

Over the last year, the Kativik Regional Government has worked alongside the region’s Kautaapikkut mining roundtable, a body launched last year to encourage Inuit

employment in Nunavik's mines and mor specifically, to look at the under-employment of women.

Together men and women make up 15 per cent of all Nunavimmiut working at the region's two mines.

But fewer than half of all Inuit working at the region's two operating mines are women; about 44 per cent at Glencore Raglan's nickel operation, and about 20 per cent at Canadian Royalties' Nunavik Nickel.

Cynthia Cookie-Simard, an Inuit employment and training officer with Canadian Royalties, travelled through Nunavik last winter to meet with Inuit women.

She and colleagues in the mining industry asked women what keeps them from working at the mines, Cookie-Simard told the KRG regional councillors meeting in Kuujjuaq Sept. 15.

"The main barrier that came up… was the importance of family and children, and the need to stay at home," she said. "They want to make sure that their children are cared for. They want to be with their family and their spouse."

With a two-week on, two-week off schedule, parents must struggle to maintain a stable home life which often involves finding childcare, and sometimes after-hours care.

Rob Nixon, who chairs the Kautaapikkut roundtable, said the group has looked at best practices in mines around the world that employ Indigenous women.

Regarding conditions at mines in Australia, Alaska and elsewhere in Canada, women had identified childcare and what they called a lack of flexible scheduling as a major barrier to employment, he said.

Mining companies have adapted their policies and some Australian mines have opened on-site daycares, Nixon noted.

But in Quebec, legislation prevents mine sites from having residents under the age of 18.

The mining roundtable is considering other options as well, he said, such as job-sharing, which could allow mothers to leave home for shorter periods of time.

"We're already seeing a commitment by these mines [because] hiring women is a key priority," Nixon said. "We're on track for identifying the things we want to accomplish, but there's still work to do."

Siasi Kanarjuak, a recruitment supervisor at Glencore's Raglan mine, said women who haven't had experience working in the mining sector don't know what kinds of jobs are

available to them, and could benefit from seeing examples of women who've been promoted to more senior positions at the mine.

Women who have experience working on site reported not feeling entirely comfortable in a predominantly Qallunaat environment which does little to support Inuit culture.

"We often see people not coming back because of racism [they've encountered]," Kanarjuak said.

Mines have started to respond to this concern, by providing cultural awareness training to all staff and by allotting space to Inuit staff for activities like cooking and sewing.

Last year, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada released the results of its own research into the impact of mining on Inuit women and families in Baker Lake, since the opening of the nearby Agnico Eagle's Meadowbank gold mine.

While the report noted the mine has spurred an increase in the number of women in the workforce, it also highlighted an increase in family stress, strains on couples and parent-child relationships.

In Nunavik, Kautaapikkut roundtable members are using their findings to develop an action plan, with community partners, with the goal of encouraging more Inuit women to apply for mining jobs.

The mining sector is now the largest employer in the region, employing 1,400 people, though the majority of those live outside Nunavik.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavik_women_say_family_demands_prevent_them_from_working_in_mini/

Aboriginal Politics

Saskatoon man works to turn out local aboriginal vote

By Joel Senick Anchor / Reporter Global News, September 10, 2015 8:08 pm

Watch above: The federal election campaign pushed on today as leaders looked to sway voters in a tight race. However there's one demographic that could prove pivotal in choosing the next prime minister. And as Joel Senick reports, one Saskatoon man is working to get them to the polls.

SASKATOON – A Saskatoon man hopes to persuade more aboriginal residents to vote in the upcoming election by visiting northern communities in the province. Marcel Petit and a group plan to visit roughly ten northern Saskatchewan reserves in an effort to educate residents on the voting process.

"It's about communication and engagement … talking to people, engage them and get them excited," said Petit in downtown Saskatoon Thursday.

"We're willing to go for two-and-a-half days on a road trip and go to all these places and probably stink like hell after a day-and-a-half," he added.

On-reserve voter turnout has been lower than the general Canadian public in recent elections. In 2011, 46.4 per cent of First Nation's people living on reserves voted, compared to 61.1 per cent nationally, according to Elections Canada.

"In this election in particular, aboriginal people in Canada, if they come out and vote in numbers comparable to the mainstream population, [they] can decide who's going to be our next prime minister," said Greg Poelzer a University of Saskatchewan political science professor.

Poelzer said 20 ridings across Canada have historically been decided by a margin that was a fraction of the aboriginal vote which didn't turn out.

"In a three-way race that we're seeing right now, twenty ridings is going to determine who's going to be prime minister," he said.

Aboriginal voter turnout numbers aren't linked to apathy, according to Poelzer. He says studies show indigenous groups are more politically active in elections that relate to their communities.

“If you look at voting participating at band level elections, even provincial it’s higher,” he said.

“If you don’t feel your issues are being talked about or that you don’t matter in the campaign, why would you be engaged,” he said, referring to one reason why he believes turnout has been lower in federal campaigns.

Aboriginal issues have been more central to this election campaign, according to Poelzer, which may make Petit’s job easier. His group also held a public forum Wednesday night in Saskatoon to discuss how indigenous issues relate to voting.

“You get three hundred thousand aboriginal and Inuit and Métis people voting across Canada, that’s a lot of people.”

Direct Link: http://globalnews.ca/news/2214518/saskatoon-man-works-to-turn-out-local-aboriginal-vote/

Métis leaders call for general assembly in Saskatoon

Goal to form provincial organization

CBC News Posted: Sep 11, 2015 1:08 PM CT Last Updated: Sep 11, 2015 1:08 PM CT

Métis local presidents Bryan Lee and Kelvin Roy met with reporters Friday. (CBC)

A number of Métis local presidents have called for a general assembly later this month in Saskatoon.

"We the grassroots people are taking steps to ensure the collective voices of our nation are being heard and respected," said Kelvin Roy, president of the Green Lake Métis local.

The goal of the planned assembly is to try and get the Métis provincial organization running again.

The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan is in political and financial limbo right now. It hasn't held a legislative assembly in five years while competing factions battle in court.

"Our rights as indigenous peoples have and are being denied by our leaders and the provincial justice system," said Roy.

Roy and a few other local presidents are calling for a general assembly on Sept. 26, 2015.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/m%C3%A9tis-leaders-call-for-general-assembly-in-saskatoon-1.3224639

Meeting with First Nations sets pathway to reconciliation in B.C.

Talks followed Supreme Court of Canada ruling that granted aboriginal title to Tsilhqot'in Nation

By Dirk Meissner, The Canadian Press Posted: Sep 11, 2015 7:34 AM PT Last Updated: Sep 11, 2015 7:34 AM PT

British Columbia Premier Christy Clark, right, greets Chief Michael LeBourdais, of the Whispering Pines-Clinton Indian Band in the Shuswap First Nation near Kamloops, B.C., after addressing a gathering of First Nations leaders and B.C. cabinet ministers in Vancouver, B.C., on Thursday. (Darryl Dick/The Canadian Press)

Leaders of British Columbia's First Nations came looking for a home run but left a meetings with Premier Christy Clark and her cabinet yesterday wondering if they even made it to first base.

At least a year will have to pass before the leaders will know if they cleared the fence or hit a sacrifice bunt while trying to resolve historic land rights with the government, said

Grand Chief Ed John of the First Nations Summit, one of B.C.'s largest aboriginal groups.

Hundreds of First Nations' leaders approved on Thursday a 12-page reconciliation document that is being billed as a guide for future economic, social and legal relations between aboriginals and the province.

"The commitment is really there," said John who called the talks constructive and positive. "Now we need to dig down and do the actions that are necessary to follow up. Last year we kind of fell apart."

"We are going to have our disagreements and that is absolutely true, and that disagreement fundamentally is about the land itself and the right of First Nations to the land," he said.

Stronger ties

Clark said her government supports the document and called on First Nations to become the driving force behind the wide-ranging agreement that forges a stronger economic and social partnership between First Nations and British Columbians.

"I have heard from you loud and clear you see reconciliation as something unique to your communities," she said at the conclusion of a two-day gathering in Vancouver. "We need to go down the path of reconciliation."

British Columbia Premier Christy Clark addresses a gathering of First Nations leaders and B.C. cabinet ministers in Vancouver, B.C., on Thursday September 10, 2015. Hundreds of First Nations leaders have given approval in principle to a reconciliation agreement that is viewed as a road map for future economic, social and legal relations between aboriginals and the British Columbia government. (Darryl Dick/The Canadian Press)

The document states the goals and objectives of reconciliation include "Achieving predictability and stability in the economy, and closing the socio-economic gap that persists between First Nations and non-First Nations."

Clark said reconciliation involves improving the lives of families, especially children. She said the images of the dead Syrian boy on a beach hit her as a parent and hit the parents of First Nations even harder.

"In seeing Alan Kurdi there, we saw our own children," she said. "Every parent knows that sense of fragility. The number of First Nations' children who find their way into government care is a problem across the country."

She pledged to hold a meeting to discuss aboriginal children's issues in the coming months and vowed to ensure the federal government will send representatives to next year's chiefs' gathering.

Strike two

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, said the government is currently at Strike 2 when it comes to reconciliation, and if there is no significant movement over the next year, First Nations will return to legal challenges and protest camps.

"Today was a step," said Shane Gottfriedson, B.C. Assembly of First Nations' regional chief. "This gathering gave me the confidence there is a way forward."

Chief Roger William, of the Tsilhqot'in First Nation, stands next to a mockup of a highway sign with English and the traditional names of towns signed by B.C. Premier Christy Clark. The signs will go up on highways in the central interior of B.C. with an announcement expected next week. (Darryl Dick/The Canadian Press)

Aboriginal relations Minister John Rustad said he could not put a deadline on reaching reconciliation.

"It's not about a destination," he said. "It really is about a journey."

First Nations — buoyed by the Supreme Court of Canada land rights victory in central B.C. — want more say and revenue sharing on proposed resource projects on land they consider their territory.

Most of B.C.'s major development projects, including the Site C hydroelectric dam and the Kinder Morgan and Northern Gateway pipeline projects, already face court challenges from First

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/first-nations-reconciliation-chiefs-1.3224046

New Mrs. Universe encourages First Nations people to vote for change

The new Mrs. Universe Ashley Callingbull has been outspoken in her views of the Conservative government.

by Caitlin Thompson - Coast Mountain News

posted Sep 11, 2015 at 10:00 AM

The first Canadian and First Nations woman to win Mrs. Universe is using her new fame to urge aboriginal people in Canada to vote to oust the Conservatives in the federal election.

Ashley Callingbull said the Tory government treats First Nations people like “terrorists” and that the government is working against them.

“I believe that this government was created to work against us and not for us,” said Ashley Callingbull in an interview with Rosemary Barton on CBC's Power & Politics last Wednesday. “There's just so many problems with it for First Nations people. We're always put on the back burner.”

Callingbull, who is trained as a professional actress and featured the APTN series "Blackstone," said she'll use her Mrs. Universe win to voice her concerns about First Nations issues in Canada.

"With the bills that have been passed, we are being treated like terrorists if we're fighting for our land and our water," Callingbullsaid. "It's our right to, and now we're being treated like terrorists if we do anything about it ... It's ridiculous."

The theme for this year's competition was "domestic violence and reflection over children." As a survivor of both sexual and physical abuse, Callingbull told CTV News that she "wanted to be there for other women, to have a voice for them, because a lot of people can't talk about things like that. And a lot of people can't heal on their own. They need someone to guide them."

Callingbull has been open about her past, saying she hoped her story would help others dealing with the same pain.

"I was picking bottles for food. I would have never thought I'm going to be Mrs. Universe someday," she said. "Growing up and dealing with that, I thought this is a perfect platform to share my story … to be a success story for them."

She also wanted to celebrate her First Nations identity, wearing a traditional jingle dress for the parade of nations, and singing a traditional song for the talent competition. "A lot of people misrepresent us in pageants," she told CTV news. "For example, if a Canadian woman is representing Canada, they might wear a revealing, sexualized outfit, with a head dress, and that is a complete misrepresentation."

Twitter exploded with support for Callingbull — posts crowned her "an inspiration," "a trailblazer" and "the most interesting person in Canada right now."

Author and fellow Albertan Kelly Oxford penned a congratulations message on Instagram, saying that while she is "typically anti-pageant and objectification of women," she believes "Ashley will be such a positive inspiration for so many Canadian First Nations girls — who are the group of Canadians needing it the very, very most."

"I urge all First Nations people in Canada to vote in this upcoming election. We are in desparate need of a new Prime Minister," Callingbull said on social media. "Fight for your rights before they get taken away. Please vote to make change. Say NO to Harper's government!"

Direct Link: http://www.coastmountainnews.com/news/326738441.html

Elections Canada touts plan for aboriginal vote

Ian MacLeod, Ottawa Citizen
Published on: September 14, 2015 | Last Updated: September 14, 2015 5:26 PM EDT

Marc Mayrand, Chief Electoral Officer, has a plan to help First Nations's voters prove their address. FRED CHARTRAND / THE CANADIAN PRESS

Voters from First Nation reserves with no formal home addresses can still cast ballots under a plan devised by Elections Canada and aboriginal groups to adapt to the tougher new voter identification law.

The federal election agency Tuesday also begins disseminating voting information to all voting-age citizens on Facebook.

The move into social media is the first step in a broader radio, TV and print advertising blitz reminding Canadians they need to register and show new types of ID – voter information cards will no longer be accepted as proof of address – when they vote Oct. 19.

For reserve aboriginals with no official street addresses, special form letters are available that can be signed by a band administrator confirming an individual is a band resident. The letters – printable versions are available on the Assembly of First Nations website – will be accepted as proof of residence at polling stations.

“One of the problems we have in this country is that often on reserves there’s no address at all,” Chief Electoral Officer Marc Maynard said Monday.

The agency also is printing election information in 15 native languages, one element of an effort to improve aboriginals’ historically scarce voter participation.

Turnout among aboriginals has always trailed non-aboriginals. Exact figures are hard to nail down, in part because it's difficult to determine how many aboriginals living in urban centres actually cast ballots. But turnout on reserves has been between 15 and 21 percentage points lower than that of the general population since 2004.

The average turnout for eligible voters on First Nations reserves in 2011 was reported at 44 per cent, compared to an overall 61.1 per cent turnout.

The AFN believes if indigenous voters turn out en masse Oct. 19, they could influence the results in as many as 51 federal ridings.

A January 2013 analysis of Elections Canada data by polling website threehundredeight.com found the NDP the clear winner among voters on reserves during the 2011 election, with 43 per cent support. That was 12 points higher than the party's support among the general population.

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Twitter.com/macleod_ian

What you need to vote:

– Make sure you're registered to vote with Elections Canada.

– Show one of these pieces of ID at your polling station: a driver's licence; provincial or territorial ID card; or any other government card with your photo, name and current address.

– Or, show two pieces of ID. Both must have your name and at least one must have your current address. Examples include a bank statement, government cheque stub, utilitity bill, aboriginal confirmation of residence letter.

– Or, take an oath, show two pieces of ID with your name, and have someone who knows you present to attest to your address. That person must show proof of identity and address, be registered in the same polling division, and may attest for only one person.

Direct Link: http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/elections-canada-unveils-plan-for-aboriginal-vote

Indigenous voting: U of W scholars weigh benefits of casting ballots

University of Winnipeg hosts indigenous voting forum with Pam Palmater, Rob Innes and Leah Gazan

CBC News Posted: Sep 14, 2015 10:24 AM CT Last Updated: Sep 15, 2015 9:46 AM CT

There's been a big push heading into October's federal election to encourage indigenous voters to cast ballots, but in Winnipeg on Monday, one indigenous scholar argued they shouldn't.

Pam Palmater, the chair of Ryerson University's Centre for Indigenous Governance, made the case for why indigenous people shouldn't vote at a University of Winnipeg forum.

The University of Winnipeg is hosting a forum on indigenous voting and sovereignty on Monday. (Chris Glover/CBC)

"Voting in someone else's system is not part of exercising our sovereignty," she said. "Every single time we have resisted some major initiative on the ground, we have been successful."

Palmater pointed to the Meech Lake Accord as well as the First Nations Governance Act as examples.

"That's all because of our resistance on the ground. It wasn't from knocking on doors and voting in elections," Palmater.

The event, dubbed To Vote or Not to Vote, was the first in a series of indigenous scholars forums planned at the university this year, and students also heard from Professor Rob Innes and lecturer Leah Gazan on the issue.

"Whether we like it or not, we're all part of the current systems -- medicine, passports, funding -- that affects whether we have affordable and proper housing or not," argued Gazan. "We deserve to have a say in how our lives are impacted by government decisions."

Indigenous voting has been historically low; Elections Canada reports voter turnout on First Nations is generally 15 to 20 per cent lower than the general population.

CBC reporter Meagan Fiddler caught up with a number of young, indigenous voters and asked if they plan to vote.

20-year-old Winnipegger Gerald Roulette said he's considering voting in October's election, but he's not sure.

"My brother told me I should … he told me it's a good thing to do," said Roulette. "It just doesn't catch my interest … It kind of feels weird voting for one person because I don't know anything about them."

Kailee Hager, a 20-year-old adult education student, said she wants to vote but needs a lot more information before she makes a decision.

"I feel like I want to vote, but I just don't know. I want to know who's running and stuff," she said. "It would just feel good to have a say in stuff for once."

In Winnipeg Centre, Liberal candidate Robert-Falcon Ouellette is knocking on doors and talking to voters. He said he thinks the tide is changing for indigenous voters.

"I think a lot of elders are starting to realize that, if you're outside the political system, people don't have to listen to you as much," he said. "It's better to be on the inside, having those negotiations and really trying to effect change from within.

The University of Winnipeg plans to hold more scholar forums on indigenous issues in the coming months.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/indigenous-voting-u-of-w-scholars-weigh-benefits-of-casting-ballots-1.3227378

Mrs. Universe Coming to London to Drum Up First Nations Voter Turnout

London, Ontario, Canada / (CFPL AM) AM 980

September 14, 2015 04:08 pm

While political candidates in London and across the country are wooing supporters and mobilizing voters, local First Nations activists are trying to get out the vote with London's aboriginal, Metis and "Urban Indigenous" communities.

Rally the First Nations Vote takes place Monday, September 14th from 6:30-9:00pm at the Wolf Performance Hall in London's Central Library. Among the guest speakers is Ashley Callingbull-Burnham, who has been making headlines in recent weeks after being crowned the first aboriginal Mrs. Universe.

The event, which will also feature an Elections Canada presentation and remarks by Tyrone Souliere and Tina Maravich, aims to encourage people to register to vote, and vote for candidates that "will honor (sic) the treaties and honor (sic) the First Nation rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

To organizer Barry Callow, the event isn't about promoting a party, but encouraging voter participation.

"The whole idea of this is to get not only First Nations people out for the first time, but anybody out who wants to vote," he said. "This is a non-partisan event, and that's why we have all the different parties coming tonight. (Attendees) can ask questions, each candidate can speak for their party, and it's up to them to come to their own conclusion on whom they want to vote for."

While there are undoubtedly historic differences between First Nations issues and general national election issues, Callow acknowledged that there are more similarities than differences in terms of electoral priorities.

"I think for the First Nations voters it's (about) being recognized," he said. "They want the same thing as everyone else. They want clean water, clean air, an economy that's good. It's the same things as we all want."

Direct Link: http://www.am980.ca/2015/09/14/mrs-universe-coming-to-london-to-drum-up-first-nations-voter-turnout/

Aboriginal issues take the forefront at Friday's all candidates meeting

Peterborough This Week
By Todd Vandonk, 21 hours ago

PETERBOROUGH-- With approximately 7,000 aboriginal people in the Peterborough-Kawartha riding, Elizabeth Stone says there's an opportunity to have their voices heard and have Aboriginal issues at the forefront heading into the Oct. 19 federal election.

"We are not on anyone's radar but there's 6,000 Aboriginal people in the City and 1,000 in Curve Lake," says Ms Stone, executive director at Niijkiwendidaa Anishnaabekwewag Services Circle.

"We are not going to see any change unless we exercise our right to participate in government."

Niijkiwendidaa Anishnaabekwewag is hosting an all-candidates debate on Aboriginal issues on Friday (Sept. 18) at the Peterborough Lions Community Centre from 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Liberal candidate Maryam Monsef, NDP candidate Dave Nickle and Green Party rep Doug Mason will have the floor to highlight their party platforms on aboriginal issues while Conservative candidate Michael Skinner will be absent due to a scheduling

conflict. Ms Stone says candidates will answer eight prepared questions before taking questions from the community.

The NDP Aboriginal platform is lengthy, highlighting a handful of issues, including a inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal woman, a focus on the Truth and Reconciliation findings on the residential school system, investing in health, education, housing and social services, and supporting traditional economies.

The Liberals say they'll also establish a national inquiry into murdered and missing women and implement full recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on findings while the Conservatives say they will study the recommendations and have committed $567 million over five years for Aboriginal people and northerners for community development.

"We want them to actually take aboriginal issues seriously and it not just be a check box," she explains.

"The number one wish would be better consultation with aboriginal people."

Direct Link: http://www.mykawartha.com/news-story/5842887-aboriginal-issues-take-the-forefront-at-friday-s-all-candidates-meeting/

Cree candidate weathers controversy at mid-point of campaign

Investigates | September 14, 2015 by APTN Investigates

With just over half the Indigenous candidates now profiled, and just over half the campaigning over, NDPer Katherine Swampy is in our spotlight today. This is after she

had to weather some controversy over the weekend. Last Thursday, the right-wing blog, The Rebel, dredged up some Instagram photos posted by Swampy's husband, Armand, in 2011. In one of them, he is posing with his younger brother and another man, where one of them is pointing what looks like a hand gun into the camera. The incident made headlines in the mainstream media, and Conservatives immediately called for Swampy to step down as a candidate.

The NDP have said the gun is a toy, and on Friday, September 11th, Swampy took to Facebook to post an apology:

"The photo in question was taken over five years ago and includes my husband Armand's younger brother who passed away from suicide in 2013.

"The death of his younger brother had an immense impact on Armand's life. In addition to being an entrepreneur who runs his own construction business, repairing homes in the community and he works as a tattoo artist in a health inspected/locally owned shop, Armand speaks to kids in schools about getting an education and becoming functioning members of society. He also councils suicidal youth in our community.

"He is a loving and caring father of 5 and a supportive husband who helped me achieve a university degree and strive to further assist our community by bringing our voice to Ottawa."

Some also made issue of comments laced with profanity Swampy posted on Facebook some time ago. "In addition, in a past heated exchange on my Facebook page, profanity was used. I apologize for this language and to anyone who may have been offended," she said.

As of this writing, it doesn't look like the NDP are going to ask Swampy to step down as a candidate. So just who is Katherine Swampy? She is running in the Alberta riding of Battle River-Crowfoot. She is a member of the Maskwacis Cree Nation and recently completed a degree in Economics from the University of Alberta. After graduation, she was employed as a tax officer with Revenue Canada.

Swampy joined the NDP in 2011 and ran for them provincially in Alberta's spring election for the riding of Drayton Valley-Devon. She promised if elected back then to build a hospital that would have had an addictions centre and an Aboriginal wing that used traditional medicine and ecological knowledge. "Because I feel like if we do not truly embrace that now, it is going to be lost forever," she told the Drayton Valley Western Review at the time. She placed third behind the Progressive Conservative candidate and the winner, Mark Smith of the Wildrose Party.

A week after the provincial vote, Swampy told APTN National News that she experienced a fair amount of hate and racism in that campaign: "She was told by many of her Devon-Drayton Valley constituents that they were wanting to support NDP but felt they couldn't because, 'you're native' or 'you're an Indian.' Another common comment she received from people was to 'quit trying to turn Alberta into a reserve.'" She was also told that she was more likely to end up missing or murdered than be elected.

Despite all that, she is now running federally against Andy Kowalski for the Liberals, Green Party candidate Gary Kelly and long-time Conservative incumbent Kevin Sorenson. Even before last week's controversy, Swampy faced a very difficult challenge. Although Battle River-Crowfoot is a new riding, it was created out of two other constituencies that voted overwhelmingly for the Conservative Party. In 2011, Sorenson won Crowfoot in a landslide, capturing nearly 84% of the vote. Swampy's call for more resources going into health, education and the family may not be well received here. She will need the vote of every Aboriginal person and then some to have a chance at victory.

Direct Link: http://aptn.ca/news/2015/09/14/cree-candidate-weathers-controversy-at-mid-point-of-campaign/

"It's not something that happens overnight." Alberta Premier asks Indigenous peoples to be patient while government works on promises

National News | September 15, 2015 by Brandi Morin |

Brandi Morin
APTN National News
CALGARY – First Nations need to be patient when it comes to the province of Alberta implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other promises made on the spring election campaign trail according to Premier Rachel Notley.

In a sit down interview with APTN, Notley said her government has been working "furiously" over the last few months since taking office to move forward on a number of goals including putting UNDRIP into place.

"It's not something that's happening overnight," said Notley. "We sent a letter to ministers about UNDRIP to evaluate the work that they do and come back to us to report on what's already aligned, what can be improved and whether there are problem areas that are potentially in conflict."

UNDRIP is just one of the goals Notley has committed to.

While campaigning in the last provincial election, the Alberta NDP also joined the call for an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and after the election, in early June, apologized for the provinces role in the residential school era.

In regard to free, prior and informed consent when it comes to natural resources and economic development Notley admits there is a lot of confusion about how that's defined within the contexts of UNDRIP and evolving Canadian laws. And the priorities of all Albertan's is what's considered first.

"Quite honestly, we have a province that is very much driven by development and the production of our natural resources," said Notley. "So we're not looking at approaching this in a way that would result in economic development suddenly grinding to a halt subject to free, prior and informed consent. And quite frankly the conversations that I've had with many First Nations leaders is they don't see that that is the consequence of that."

Notley said her government also plans to repeal Bill 22, the controversial Alberta Aboriginal Consultation Act introduced when the Progressive Conservatives were in power that upset many First Nations who said they were not consulted. The bill allowed the province to regulate consultation with industry over development on Aboriginal land. Many First Nations boycotted the legislation last year.

Now the province is looking at ways to improve the consultation process and to provide resources to First Nations to be able to have full knowledge of happenings at the table with industry.

“What we have now is ad hoc consultation with partners who don’t necessarily come to the table with the same level of resources. I’ve been to meetings as the premier with industry representatives, where they’ve sat down and put down three feet of documentation about their position and I’ve felt overwhelmed by it,” according to Notley. “And so, I understand the critical importance of providing adequate resources to First Nation negotiators and leaders when it comes to figuring out what’s best for their community in terms of negotiating.”

Resource revenue sharing is another issue that Alberta AFN Regional Chief Craig Mackinaw and other Indigenous leaders would like to discuss with the province.

“I don’t think we’re at a point where we would say thou shalt give x percentage of all royalties to x or y group. But I do think that there needs to be more potential work around ensuring that communities who agree with the resource development that’s occurring on their lands gain more vantage from it,” said Notley. “I think we’ve got some examples of where that does happen, where forward thinking industrial proponents have entered into agreements with indigenous communities that have their true benefit in mind- we need to move away from this idea that they just get to march in and do their thing and not

understand their obligations to reach some form of common understanding that benefits all parties."

However, she added that conversations also need to happen at the national level.

Notely called the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women "fundamentally important," and said it needs to be addressed via partnership with First Nations.

Approaching the federal election this fall Notley said she will wait on the outcome before making any movements beyond supporting a national inquiry.

"Before we start committing a lot of resources to addressing that let's wait and see who wins the election. Because I think should we end up with a different government- and I'm quite confident if it's Thomas Mulcair that we'll see the federal government leading that inquiry. And then the role of the province will be much clearer in terms of what to do."

Although she said she understands the complex issues of whether Indigenous People choose to vote or not, she believes First Nations will have an impact should they do so.

"I think they should vote. And I have faith in Tom Mulcair that he has an understanding of the exceptional importance of renewing and improving the relationship between our federal government and First Nations. I would suggest that certainly, without question, Tom Mulcair as Prime Minister would bring about some pretty significant improvements in the rights of First Nations across the country."

Alberta Minister of Aboriginal Relations Kathleen Ganley is expected to gather the mandated UNDRIP action steps from each government portfolio holder and present them to cabinet sometime next spring.

Direct Link: http://aptn.ca/news/2015/09/15/its-not-something-that-happens-overnight-alberta-premier-asks-indigenous-peoples-to-be-patient-while-government-works-on-promises/

Yukon man urges young aboriginal people to vote

23-year-old Connor Whitehouse wants his peers to turn out en masse on Oct. 19

By Nancy Thomson, CBC News Posted: Sep 15, 2015 6:15 PM CT Last Updated: Sep 15, 2015 6:15 PM CT

'I'd like to encourage young adults to participate in the Federal Election here in Yukon and to support and vote for candidate of choice,' says Connor Whitehouse. (Submitted by Connor Whitehouse)

Connor Whitehouse is calling on First Nations youth to head to the polls on October 19.

The 23-year-old is a member of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation in Dawson City and is the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council representative for the Yukon.

Whitehouse says it's important for young aboriginal people to make their mark in the election. He says the First Nations vote could tip the balance in the Yukon — and across the country.

"I think this young generation of Yukon First Nations — and First Nations in Canada, coast to coast to coast — want to be more engaged," he says. "They're more curious about issues, they want to know, they want to be informed and they want to vote."

Whitehouse says it's important for people to know where to go to cast their ballot, and before that, to ensure that they are on the voters list.

He says people should check with their First Nation to make sure they're registered to vote.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yukon-man-urges-young-aboriginal-people-to-vote-1.3229819

Manifesto backed by prominent NDPers calls for overhaul of capitalist economy

Aim to wean Canada off fossil fuel, backed by over 100 aboriginal leaders, environmentalists

By Joan Bryden, The Canadian Press Posted: Sep 15, 2015 10:33 AM ET Last Updated: Sep 15, 2015 11:10 AM ET

Just as Tom Mulcair attempts to convince Canadians that the NDP is a safe, moderate choice in the Oct. 19 election, some of his party's highest profile supporters are issuing a manifesto calling for a radical restructuring of the country's economy.

The "leap manifesto," signed by more than 100 actors, musicians, labour unions, aboriginal leaders, environmentalists and other activists, aims to pressure the next federal government to wean Canada entirely off fossil fuels in as little as 20 years and, in the process, upend the capitalist system on which the economy is based.

It has been translated into eight languages, including Cree and Inuktitut.

The drivers of the manifesto are best-selling author Naomi Klein and her husband Avi Lewis. It echoes the theme of Klein's latest book: *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, which was turned into a documentary of the same name, directed by Lewis.

Today's release of the manifesto coincides with the debut of the documentary over the weekend at the Toronto International Film Festival.

The dramatic transformation envisioned in the manifesto is in stark contrast to the pragmatic platform Mulcair is offering: balanced budgets, an openness to free trade deals, sustainable development of Alberta's oil sands, no tax hikes except for a "slight and graduated" increase in the corporate tax rate.

Yet among the celebrity signatories are a number of prominent NDP supporters, including former Ontario NDP leader Stephen Lewis, father of Avi, who gave a rousing introduction for Mulcair at a campaign event in Toronto last month.

Others signatories who've declared their NDP sympathies include pop duo Tegan and Sara, singer-songwriter Leslie Feist, Canadian Labour Congress president Hassan Yussuf and Paul Moist, president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

Stephen Lewis doesn't see his support for Mulcair as inconsistent with the manifesto, which he notes is also signed by people from other parties, including Roy McMurtry, a former Ontario chief justice and one-time provincial Conservative cabinet minister.

"For the New Democrats, it's an extension of the kinds of things they've been talking about," Lewis said in an interview.

"When Tom Mulcair talks about climate change and the importance of dealing with global warming in Canada and internationally, this is an extension — admittedly a dramatic and vivid extension — of the kinds of things that many of us yearn for."

Starting with the premise that Canada's record on climate change is "a crime against humanity's future," the manifesto argues the country needs to make the leap from fossil fuel dependence to getting 100 per cent of its electricity from renewable resources — a feat it maintains is feasible within two decades.

This means adopting a new "iron law" of energy development: If you wouldn't want it in your backyard, then it doesn't belong in anyone's backyard," to be applied equally to pipelines, fracking, increased oil tanker traffic and Canadian-owned mining projects abroad.

In the process, the manifesto envisions a transformation of the entire capitalist system into a Utopia in which the economy is "in balance with the earth's limits," jobs "are designed to systematically eliminate racial and gender inequality," agriculture is "far more localized and ecologically based," and low-carbon sectors of the economy, like caregiving, teaching, social work, the arts and public-interest media, flourish.

The signatories declare their belief in "energy democracy," in which energy sources are collectively controlled by communities, rather than "profit-gouging" private companies.

They call for an end to "all corporate trade deals" that interfere with attempts to build local economies and regulate
corporations.

In contrast to Mulcair's insistence that running deficits puts an unfair economic burden on future generations, the signatories declare that "austerity — which has systematically attacked low-carbon sectors like education and health care, while starving public transit and forcing reckless energy privatizations — is a fossilized form of thinking that has become a threat to life on earth."

The signatories assert that the money to pay for the transformation they envision is readily available. All it requires

is for the federal government to end fossil fuel subsidies, cut military spending and impose financial transaction taxes, increased resource royalties and higher income taxes on corporations and wealthy individuals.

Other manifesto signatories include actors Ellen Page, Rachel McAdams, Sarah Polley, Pamela Anderson and Donald Sutherland, singers Bruce Cockburn, Neil Young, Gord Downie, Sarah Harmer and Leonard Cohen, novelists Michael Ondaatje and Joseph Boyden, environmentalist David Suzuki, anti-free trade activist Maude Barlow, artist Robert Bateman and film director Patricia Rozema.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/manifesto-backed-by-prominent-ndpers-calls-for-overhaul-of-capitalist-economy-1.3228713

First Nation voters can and must flex their ballots

by Expositor Staff - Sep 16, 2015

This election, there is concerted national push to encourage First Nations citizens to ensure their names are on voters lists and then to get out and vote in Canada's General Election on October 19.

There are proponents of this move for First Nations voters to have an impact on the outcome, riding by riding, where there are sufficient votes to make a substantial difference, regionally across the country. The Batchawana Bay First Nation near Sault Ste.. Marie is, for the first time ever, allowing a polling station in that community. This is a movement away from the traditionally held view by many in that community and other First Nation territories that the provincial and federal elections are "the business of others."

But in this election, in Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia, the First Nations vote can determine the winner in a great many ridings.

The Idle No More protest of 2013-2014 may have served to ignite an interest in getting out the First Nations vote, but the movement is unprecedented on such a national scale.

Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing is one riding where one First Nation political activist definitely made a difference to the outcome of the 2006 General Election in this riding, the last time the Liberals held the seat.

First Nations leaders also claim to have made the difference in AMK during the 2008 election when the Liberal stronghold that began in the 1930s was overturned. The riding was much smaller and called Algoma East through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, before the riding grew larger and was re-named Algoma-Manitoulin and even later took on its

present incarnation as Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing and its status as the second largest riding in the country.

Through all of these changes, until 2008, this was Liberal country.

During the 2006 campaign, Liberal activist and Wikwemikong resident the late Tom Peltier was an early advocate of First Nations voting. He sensed the possibility of change and calculated the number of seats nationally wherein the indigenous vote could decide the outcome. He set about encouraging AMK First Nations citizens to vote and to vote Liberal.

Enough voters responded from the far North of the riding to Manitoulin Island that this identifiable vote, by poll, did indeed make the difference for former Liberal MP Brent St. Denis, allowing him to have his final electoral victory.

Mr. St. Denis' victory was by 1,408 votes, a number more than accounted for by Liberal votes at First Nations polling places throughout AMK.

This was a lesson not lost on the New Democratic Party as, in recognition that the balance of electoral power lay with the First Nation vote in this riding, during the pre-campaign and then the campaign period for the 2008 election, NDP challenger Carol Hughes worked hard to make herself known to First Nations leaders in, at least, this part of the riding and the North Shore. The late NDP leader Jack Layton made appearances here on her behalf and in that election, her third as challenger, she emerged victorious and remains the incumbent today.

Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing can be viewed as a model for First Nations leaders and national party political organizations, showing that the First Nation vote can carry a riding. Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief Perry Bellegarde is right on the money in encouraging a higher voter turnout among his national constituency.

But there is one more reason to encourage a large First Nations voter turnout, one that trumps mere local electoral outcomes.

The relative importance of First Nation issues will, at some level, be considered directly in proportion to the interest the national community has demonstrated in the business of the nation. No matter who benefits from individual votes, it is the cumulative, Canada-wide poll that is noticed by politicians and by those who advise them.

Some communities and interest groups are constantly in the minds of politicians and policy is devised with their vote in mind.

It doesn't ultimately matter who they voted for, but they voted and thus exert, as a collective, an influence on the political parties, particularly the one in power.

The October 19 vote counts for all of us, for a whole variety of reasons.

But in light of, for example, the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that considered the impact of residential schools on the First Nation population, the larger the voter turnout from this cadre, the quicker many of these recommendations will be considered for action by government, no matter which party takes the leadership role.

- See more at: http://www.manitoulin.ca/2015/09/16/first-nation-voters-can-and-must-flex-their-ballots/#sthash.7YGudWac.dpuf

Metis candidate running for the Greens in a Conservative fortress

Investigates | September 16, 2015 by Todd Lamirande

Ralph McLean is carrying the Green banner in the suburban riding of Edmonton-Mill Woods this election. His competition for the seat include Amarjeet Sohi of the Liberals, NDPer Jasvir Deol, Conservative incumbent Tim Uppal and four fringe candidates.

Most of the information about McLean comes from his Facebook page. He was born in The Pas, Manitoba and self identifies as Metis, although he says his mother is full status Cree. He went to school in Winnipeg. And traveled the world before settling in Edmonton. McLean says he currently works in the oil and gas industry "and sees the good that the everyday people in the industry try to do, but also what the companies still need to do in lowering our global greenhouse gas emissions. He believes in engineering carbon capture at the source, and toughening our environmental standards for flare stack venting." Again, going by the articles McLean posts on his Facebook timeline, they for the most part deal with environmental issues and why voters should turf Stephen Harper.

Other than posting a couple of articles of Ashley Callingbull asking people to not re-elect Harper, his stance on Indigenous issues is not known. Then again, McLean is running in a middle-class area of southeast Edmonton with few Aboriginal voters. But instead it is dominated by an East Indian demographic.

McLean has yet to get much publicity for his campaign. He did not attend an all-candidates debate this past weekend, where jobs and the economy dominated the discussion.

Edmonton-Mill Woods is a new urban only riding. It is a cut down version of Edmonton-Mill Woods-Beaumont, which had included a section of rural land south of Edmonton. The incumbent in that riding, Mike Lake, is running in a new riding just to the south. Meanwhile, Uppal will try to keep the seat in the Conservative fold, having moved over from neighbouring Edmonton-Sherwood Park. He will probably be successful as the area is staunchly Conservative. Meanwhile McLean's campaign could be considered a success if he can get in the 3 to 4 thousand vote range.

Direct Link: http://aptn.ca/news/2015/09/16/metis-candidate-running-for-the-greens-in-a-conservative-fortress/

On the electoral war-path

After years of abstaining, aboriginal people could now be swing voters

Sep 19th 2015 | KITIGAN ZIBI, QUEBEC | From the print edition

Let’s give those forked tongues a hearing

THE FIRST NATIONS, or native Indians, of Canada have had full voting rights since 1960, but until very recently many of their leaders used their influence to dissuade their people from going to the polls. Now that may be about to change.

“The view was that it’s not our government,” says Jean Guy Whiteduck, who has been chief for 30 of the past 40 years of Kitigan Zibi reserve north of Ottawa, home to a band (sub-division) of the Algonquin people. Such purism reflects the idea that the 850,000 members of Canada’s First Nations, with their 617 bands, have a sovereignty of their own and must deal directly with the monarch who reigns over Canada as well as Britain or her representatives.

Yet that hard line is softening ahead of the country’s general election on October 19th. Although residents of Kitigan Zibi still do not want electoral posters on the reserve (they removed some from the local highway), a surprising number have told Chief Whiteduck that they now intend to vote. He in turn has shifted to a more neutral stance—telling them “it’s your choice to make”—and he is debating the possibility of casting a ballot himself.

Canada’s aboriginal people are classified as First Nations, Inuit (the indigenous people of the Arctic) or Métis, who are of mixed descent. What they share is deep frustration with the perceived indifference of the federal government.

The list of complaints is long. The government barely responded to a damning inquiry into boarding schools where aboriginal children were abused; it refused to hold an inquiry into the cases of more than 1,000 aboriginal women who were murdered or went suspiciously missing since 1980; it underfunds health and education on reserves, which is a federal task; and it changes environmental and other laws without consulting First Nations.

“Since the Canadian government doesn’t respect us, we have to change it to one that will,” says Tyrone Souliere, a founder of Rally The First Nation Vote, a movement which helps people register to vote and learn about local candidates.

Ordinarily 1.4m aboriginal Canadians would have little electoral clout in a country of more than 35m people, except in a handful of ridings (electoral districts) in the north, where indigenous people exceed 70% of the population. Close to the American border, where most Canadians live, the percentage drops to single digits.

But the electoral race is tight. The latest forecasts give the ruling Conservatives a nine-seat lead over the Liberals, their traditional rivals, with 116 of the 338 places in the House of Commons. The centre-left New Democrats are tipped to take 114 seats. The Assembly of First Nations, an advocacy group, has produced a list of 51 ridings where the aboriginal vote could decide the winner, either because of a slim margin or a high aboriginal population.

For the first time in the assembly's history, its national chief is urging his members to vote, and working with Elections Canada, a federal agency, to make sure people know how and where to do so. "It is vital that First Nation voices be heard in every way possible, including through the ballot box," says Perry Bellegarde, the national chief (pictured), who did not vote in the previous election but now says he will.

Not all First Nations agree. The Mohawks of Kahnawake, a reserve near Montreal, remain adamantly opposed on the grounds that voting means ceding sovereignty and speeding assimilation. They point to the two-row wampum belt which they have sported since striking a treaty with the Dutch 400 years ago. The belt, made of shell beads, shows two parallel lines; Mohawks say this indicates that they agreed to stay in their canoes and the Dutch in their ships, without interfering with each other. Still, in at least two northern ridings, aboriginal candidates are running for all three of the main parties. A total of 54 are running across Canada (23 New Democrats, 18 Liberals, eight Greens, four Tories and a Libertarian).

Sensing a more open door, the opposition parties are wooing aboriginals. The Liberals would invest C$2.6 billion ($2 billion) in aboriginal education over four years, and the NDP pledges a swift inquiry into the ill-fated aboriginal women. The Conservatives have yet to make an offer.

More than any party's promises, the call from First Nation leaders to vote could be the factor that pushes aboriginal participation above the previous level of around 40%. Add in the seductive idea that indigenous people may now be swing voters.

But as some recall, the last time the First Nations hoped to play a pivotal role in history, things did not end well. In 1812 they helped the British to fight the Americans to a draw. But as they read history, Britain broke its promise to assign them a vast homeland; instead they found themselves confined to reservations.

Direct Link: http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21665035-after-years-abstaining-aboriginal-people-could-now-be-swing-voters-electoral-war-path

Metis leaders propose solution to impasse

By Jason Warick, The Starphoenix September 14, 2015

Some local Metis Nation- Saskatchewan (MN-S) officials are calling for the creation of a Metis court to adjudicate the frequent disputes which erupt among various political factions.

They hope this could end the latest round of bitterness in which the provincial organization has gone five years without a legislative assembly.

"That would save everyone a lot of money and time," MN-S local president Bryan Lee told reporters at a news conference Friday in Saskatoon.

Lee estimated roughly $500,000 has been spent fighting about governance in various provincial courts in the past few years.

The idea for a separate court came from a provincial government-commissioned report by University of Saskatchewan professor and Metis citizen Marilyn Poitras.

Lee said many Metis people hoped the provincial courts would force officials to hold a legislative assembly, but that hasn't been the case. He said a Metis court would have the power to order an end to the impasse.

In the meantime, Lee and fellow local president Kelvin Roy are calling for the estimated 46,000 Saskatchewan people who self-identified as Metis in the last census to descend on Saskatoon for a Sept. 26 meeting.

They hope citizens will express their support for the resumption of the organization's governance process, and that this will force the warring factions to come to an agreement.

The inability of the factions to co-operate on a date for the required legislative assembly has cost them hundreds of thousands of government funding dollars.

"We strongly encourage all Metis citizens of Saskatchewan to attend," Roy said.

Uniting the various factions could prove difficult.

Lee and Roy said most of the 94 local presidents around the province support their calls, but only a handful showed up for Friday's event.

Direct Link:
http://www.thestarphoenix.com/news/metis+leaders+propose+solution+impasse/11358763/story.html

Conservative collapse in BC gives Metis candidate a chance

Investigates | September 11, 2015 by Todd Lamirande

A month ago there would have been no way anyone other than a Conservative would have been elected in Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola. But that's before the party's support collapsed in British Columbia. Metis Liberal candidate Karley Scott is now in a tight three-way race with NDPer Angelique Wood and Conservative incumbent Dan Albus, while Robert Mellalieu is running for the Greens.

Scott was born in Prince Albert Saskatchewan, but grew up in the Metis community of La Ronge, SK. "I spent most of the first year of my life in a papoose strapped to my father's chest while he trapped. Much of my childhood was spent in the outdoors hunting and fishing with my family," she said in a long Q & A for the KamloopsBC Now.

While in Saskatchewan she worked for the federal government, she became disenchanted with the way things worked and went back to law school. "I had spent so much time on the ground, working directly with communities and organizations who were assisting

people who were homeless, youth who were involved in the sex trade, youth who had substance abuse issues and I just became frustrated with how difficult it was to get your message up the line so your experiences can help inform the decisions that are made at a higher level," she told a local newspaper.

She is a relative newcomer to British Columbia, as she moved her family to the Okanagan in 2012 soon after finishing law school. She had no intention of running in politics but after a year of arm twisting by the Liberals she decided to go for it.

She has adopted the stance of Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau and believes marijuana should be legalized. As for Indigenous issues in her riding, she had this to say in that same Q & A, "It is imperative that we act without delay to advance the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This must be done based on respect, cooperation and the standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

Although Central Okanagan is a new riding, it has been carved out of three others, two of which have always voted Conservative or Reform. This would mean Scott's chances of being elected would normally be slim at best. However, the Conservative Party has not been faring well in polls in BC. The threehundredeight's seat projection currently gives the Conservatives only a 56 percent chance of maintaining the seat. And all three major candidates are within a few percentage points of one another. Will Scott's political inexperience be enough for her to win the seat? A month ago we would have said no way, but now…we'll see on October 19th.

Direct Link: http://aptn.ca/news/2015/09/11/conservative-collapse-in-bc-gives-metis-candidate-a-chance/

Saskatchewan Métis leaders look to meet in Saskatoon this month

By Joel Senick Anchor / Reporter Global News, September 11, 2015 7:36 pm

Watch above: Métis leaders from across the province are calling for a general assembly to sort out difference in the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan. Joel Senick finds out what the response is from the two men at the centre of the controversy.

SASKATOON – A number of Saskatchewan Métis leaders say they hope a general assembly later this month in Saskatoon will help rebuild their provincial government, which is currently without federal funding.

"We the grassroots people are taking steps to ensure the collective voices of our nation are being heard and respected," said Kelvin Roy, president of the Métis Nation of Green Lake.

Roy was one of two Métis local presidents who announced a general assembly will take place on Sept. 26 in Saskatoon. They are calling on all Métis people in Saskatchewan to attend and say one of their goals is to establish the date for a Métis Nation Legislative Assembly.

"For five years now the provincial Métis council has been in non-compliance with our constitution," said Bryan Lee, president of the Fish Lake Métis Local, who joined Roy Friday.

The issue has led to the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) losing its federal funding, since its constitution states two legislative assembles are to be held yearly.

The battle has been both political and legal. Vice-president Gerald Morin and president Robert Doucette are at odds over a number of issues, including financial transparency.

Morin leads the Provincial Métis Council, which is tasked with calling a legislative assembly. He says the action cannot happen at a general assembly.

"A general assembly under our constitution has no legal powers," said Morin.

"The only legal power it has is to ratify constitutional amendments and also to ratify the election date."

Morin says he doesn't plan on attending the general assembly as he suspects it will include posturing by Doucette. It's a notion the president of the MN-S rejects.

"I think it's important for us to go and listen to what our people have to say and then act on it," said Doucette.

"It's Métis people, saying, look, we want to meet, don't put any road blocks in the way, just set a day and a place, and we'll show up," he added.

Direct Link: http://globalnews.ca/news/2216605/saskatchewan-metis-leaders-look-to-meet-in-saskatoon-this-month/

Aboriginal Sports

District looks to develop aboriginal-focused phys ed

Samantha WRIGHT ALLEN / Prince George Citizen
September 13, 2015 10:35 PM

Kalen Spoletini, left, and Lance Potskin are the new sports coordinators for the Ab Ed department in SD 57. - Citizen photo by Brent Braaten

School District 57 has two new sports coordinators in charge of bringing in new programs at no cost to students.

They were hired by the aboriginal education department, said manager Shelly Niemi.

"Research shows that if you can engage students in healthy activities and healthy opportunities early on in their academic career, the chances are that they're going to succeed throughout the education system and graduate," said Niemi.

That's one of the ultimate focuses of the department's efforts, given the district's aboriginal graduation rate of 48 per cent compared to 81 per cent of non-aboriginal students last year.

But most of the programming will appear in schools, open to all ages and all students.

"It's going to be an inclusive program with an aboriginal focus," said Niemi of the Northern Huskies Sports Program, which was named with the help of elders.

They key is having no fee to ensure access for everybody.

"I think what really excites me about it is that it's new, that it is introducing students to a sport that they may have never been able to participate in before because funding or transportation was a barrier."

The coordinators hope to work with BC Association of Friendship Centres to bring in camps to introduce new sport to students.

This year, they already have a lacrosse camp in the works open to all students.

Both Lance Potskin and Kalen Spoletini previously worked as aboriginal educators in separate schools but will now focus on district-wide duties.

"This is for everyone," said Spoletini, who also coaches hockey outside of school.

His hope is that the format of the classes they run, both in and out of school hours, will mean kids have the chance to make new friends in other social circles.

"I feel like this breaks those barriers," said Spoletini. "(It's) also a deterrent from other activities, because some of the neighbourhoods, some of the schools have people recruiting for different things," said Potskin, often for drugs or gangs. "Kids get bored, man, and when they get bored, there are other things grabbing at them."

Spoletini recalled driving around Ron Brent elementary after school with another worker to make sure gangs weren't talking to the kids still hanging around the playgrounds.

"They target whoever, they don't care. One kid walking home, or hanging around the schools alone," said Spoletini.

That's where they hope to come.

"If they're not in that place, they're not going to get picked up," he said.

"So, getting to do this here, on a much larger scale, it's just that much more meaningful," Spoletini said.

The two are coming off a successful two-week summer hockey camp that saw about 40 kids participate and they also attended a Hockey Canada training camp themselves, to give educators ideas about how to integrate sport into classrooms.

Building on that, the department will offer hockey practices twice a week after school to Grade 6 to 9 aboriginal students at the Kin Centre.

Last year Spoletini organized an Indigenous Games for his school against Harwin elementary, inspired by the North American Indigenous Games.

"It's like the Olympics, but they implement so much culture," he explained of the day which featured archery, basketball, badminton and more.

This year, he hopes to plan it as a district-wide event in June. That concept is also one of the key ideas behind the initiative, Niemi said.

"When you do that with no cost, then you've removed that barrier that I can't participate," she said. "You get to actually be able to bring a collective group of children together to experience that sport and create new friends, new relationships, new opportunities and really focus it around connectedness to school."

- See more at: http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/district-looks-to-develop-aboriginal-focused-phys-ed-1.2057635#sthash.lo9ZyiwJ.dpuf

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

Vaughn Palmer: First Nations struggle for unanimity on LNG

Barriers to investment pop up even where broad support exists

By Vaughn Palmer, Vancouver Sun columnist September 11, 2015

Haisla Chief Councillor Ellis Ross, with a view in the background of his community and Douglas Channel, issued a strong defence of the LNG industry in the face of opposition to pipelines from a holdout group of natives.

VICTORIA — As leader of a community that stands to benefit greatly from the development of liquefied natural gas, Chief Councillor Ellis Ross of the Haisla First

Nation recently issued a strong defence of the industry in the face of opposition from a holdout group of natives.

His statement was prompted by a standoff in the territory of the neighbouring Wet'suwet'en First Nation over the routing of a pair of pipelines that would deliver natural gas to LNG terminals at Kitimat in Haisla territory.

The Wet'suwet'en, via their elected leaders, have signed on to supporting the pipelines via benefit-sharing agreements that brought construction jobs in the short run and the promise of millions of dollars in revenues in the long term.

However, one of the 12 clans that make up the First Nation, the hereditary-chief-led Unist'ot'en, are refusing access to the pipeline construction crews in their share of the territory.

The blockade has been denounced as "short sighted" by the elected chief of the Wet'suwet'en, Karen Ogen, and three other chiefs, who complained that the holdouts are drawing support from environmental activists and other outsiders.

"Environmentalism must mean more than just saying no," she told the Burns Lake District News last month. "For the first time in memory, our community will have more good paying jobs than it has people."

Enter Ross with a statement of support issued Sept. 1. "Opposition is the easiest job in the world," he observed. "The Haisla Nation supports the elected Wet'suwet'en leaders in their efforts to resolve the concerns of the Unist'ot'en and allow work on the pipelines to proceed, as the First Nations communities along both pipelines have agreed."

The following day he expanded on his reasons for supporting LNG, via an open letter posted at haisla.ca, the First Nation's website.

"When I was first elected to Haisla Nation Council, I was generally opposed to industry," he began, hearkening back a dozen years. "It didn't take long before I was confronted with the harsh reality of what our communities have been facing — poverty, suicides, and the hopelessness."

Government handouts weren't enough and Ross figured there had to be a way for his people to start helping themselves.

Then in 2004 "a gas company came knocking at our door" with the seeds of an idea for LNG development. "It was a risk and I was as big a skeptic as there was," Ross acknowledged.

Still, he believed that the governing council had a duty to consider the opportunity "as a way to dig ourselves out of grinding poverty."

The road was a challenging one for the leaders of the 1,500-member nation, involving as it did, “negotiating with governments and major multinational corporations” over the better part of 10 years.

Along the way he and his colleagues addressed more than economic concerns. “This last decade of careful research has convinced our community of the stringent environmental safeguards that are in place, as well as the safety and environmental records of natural gas pipelines and LNG transportation,” he wrote. “We have seen that natural gas is the cleanest of all fossil fuels — after breathing the air in Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo I can appreciate the desire of those countries for cleaner energy.”

By the end of the deliberations, the Haisla found themselves with a piece of the multi-billion-dollar action in two potential LNG projects, one backed by Shell, the other by Chevron, both sited near their own Kitamaat Village.

Already that has meant benefits. “During the preparation activities anybody in Kitamaat Village who wanted to work was hired,” noted Ross. “But most of the jobs that are available consist of short-term labour or service jobs connected to nearby construction camps. For us to be truly successful, we need to see our people among the first in line for the permanent skilled jobs — pipefitters, electricians, millwrights — that will come if LNG projects move ahead.”

There being enough uncertainties in that regard already — slumping markets, depressed commodity prices, rival developments that are well underway elsewhere — neither project needs the further complication of doubts about the ability to deliver the product from the natural gas deposits in the Northeast to Kitimat.

Hence Ross’s outreach to the Haisla neighbours, including the holdouts. “We have done this work, and are keen to share it with those nations which do not have the benefit of our 10 years of experience. We have a duty to take these opportunities because services like health care, highways, water and sewer — ones enjoyed by First Nations and non-First Nations alike — come with a price tag. Without reliable revenues, cutbacks are inevitable.”

The Wet’suwet’en leadership takes much the same view, capped by a recent call for all of their leaders, elected and hereditary, to meet and sort out their differences. But so far, the dispute has resisted all efforts to settle it from within or without.

Nor is there any obvious way to lift the blockade, short of a court battle, perhaps an injunction and, if worse comes to worst, police action to clear a path for the construction crews.

Not a happy situation for either government or the aboriginal community, but another reminder, if we needed one, of the multiple barriers to investment in the province. Even where projects enjoy broad support from First Nations, there’s no guarantee anything will ever get built.

Direct Link:
http://www.vancouversun.com/life/vaughn+palmer+first+nations+struggle+unanimity/11354593/story.html

New park officially opened

By Svjetlana Mlinarevic, Daily Herald-Tribune

Sunday, September 13, 2015 4:19:40 MDT PM

Leonard Cardinal plays the drum while singing a Cree bear song while a child plays in the background during the opening of Maskwôtêh Park on Thursday. The creation of the park was done in partnership between the Cree nation and the city. It took three years to come to fruition. Svjetlana Mlinarevic/Daily Herald-Tribune

If the bear symbolizes Muskoseepi Park, then Maskwôtêh Park is its heart.

After three years of planning and construction, the new park was officially unveiled on Thursday by city officials and members of the Aboriginal community.

“I think there was something that we can always do better and that’s to recognize the people that were here first – the people who were here before there was a municipality,” said Mayor Bill Given, who was choked up during the opening ceremony.

The name Maskwôtêh means “bear heart” and it was chosen during a pipe ceremony lead by elder Leonard Cardinal, who sang a drum song during the opening.

“For the Woodland people, a bear is a healer and it represents good health. A bear is an animal that can sleep so many months a year and during that time it doesn’t really eat so it has those attributes. So when we look at that symbol of the bear, it represents that courage, that strength, that endurance, that healing,” said Cardinal. “When people come to this park, my hope is that they feel good and happy. For the hospital that’s sitting across the creek, when people look out, hopefully they get something out of it too.”

The park is adjacent to the still under-construction Grande Prairie Regional Hospital, north of the bypass on 116 Avenue and is accessible by a walking trail that runs under the bypass from Centre 2000.

For Cardinal and those who attended the ceremony, the park was also a way to bridge the gap between First Nations and other Canadians.

“The future vision of the park and the whole idea of around incorporating aboriginal culture and traditions...and explaining different cultures in the area, because this is the traditional home of the Cree, the Beaver, and the Dene, and honouring that and making sure that as a community we don’t forget that,” said Shannon Dunfield, co-chairwoman of the Grande Prairie Aboriginal Circle of Services (GPACS), adding the addition of a teepee and a Red River cart to symbolize aboriginal and Metis cultures could be added in the future.

Dunfield, who also works for the Grande Prairie School Division, said 17% of Grande Prairie students are aboriginal. For the kids who were at the opening, the park was a great place to have fun and explore.

“This park is very cool and I like it. It’s very well (designed) with the fossils and a classroom right there and a playground here. What I like best is that you can climb stuff and find fossils,” said 12-year-old Takoda Dunfield.

The park contains three pods: A dinosaur-themed playground with hidden fossils, rope bridges and climbing boulders, an outdoor classroom, and a picnic area. The city plans on possibly building an interpretive component to the park and maybe installing fitness equipment in the future.

The $300,000 project is a part of the city’s 100th anniversary legacy project, with the city’s four Rotary clubs donating $150,000 towards the play area. The city intends to use the location of the park as a jumping off point to extend Muskoseepi Park further as the city grows.

Direct Link: http://www.dailyheraldtribune.com/2015/09/13/new-park-officially-opened

Stephen Hume: First Nations treasure historic ties to water

A series of court rulings has given aboriginal peoples prior rights over waterways

By Stephen Hume, Vancouver Sun columnist September 15, 2015

Scarred marks deep in rock beside Fraser River (near Yale) at “thexlis” (gritting his teeth) — picture of hand of Sonny McHalsie of the Stolo Nation by one of the slash marks. They believe marks made by “transformer” who dug his nails into rocks. These very marks were shown to Simon Fraser on June 28th/1808.

From mossy rainforest to sage brush desert, water pulses through B.C.’s First Nations cultures as powerfully as the tides, rivers and rains that shaped and sustain the landscape we all inhabit together, plants, animals and people alike.

And if, as climate science suggests, the drought of 2015 is a herald of the future, water and First Nations’ prior rights to it promise to dramatically reconfigure the business and political landscape.

To the Tlingit, water is k’watl. To the Lheidli T’enneh, it’s too. To the Tsimshian, it’s aks. The Secwepemc call it clexlix, the Carrier refer to it as thé and to the speakers of Halkomelem, it’s iyem.

Entire nations take their name from water — the Sto:lo of the Fraser Valley are the river people. The Dakelh of the central Interior are people who go around by boat. Examine a map of First Nations in B.C. and all of the 203 communities are located on fish-bearing waterways — and so is every now-unoccupied reserve.

The Nuxalk of Bella Coola, the Sechelt of the Sunshine Coast, the Cowichan of Vancouver Island, the Haida of Skidegate and the Nlaka’pamux of Lytton are examples of how broadly water’s sacred properties infuse nation-defining myths, legends and most private spiritual beliefs.

For the Cheslatta, west of Prince George, water also symbolizes the tangible spectre of heedless industrial progress. They suffer either from too much water in the Cheslatta River — it repeatedly floods, washing out ancestral graves whenever a half-century-old aluminum smelter spills its reservoir surplus — or suffer from too little water in the Nechako River, from which the water is diverted to the reservoir, even as culturally crucial downstream salmon runs dwindle.

In the Peace River district, water represents both the alarming present and the unwelcome future for the First Nations of the Treaty 8 Tribal Association. Planned flooding of traditional territories by the Site C dam has already spawned a court case.

Then there's industry's claim on billions of litres of water used to fracture shale to facilitate the extraction of natural gas. Exporting liquefied natural gas from B.C. is a cornerstone of the provincial government's development strategy, but First Nations critics argue the cumulative impact of Site C, rapid expansion of drilling and the industrial appropriation of water for fracking threaten traditional ways of life that treaties supposedly guaranteed as long as the rivers flow.

Although the legal framework for aboriginal water rights in Canada is still under construction, jurisprudence in the United States dating back more than a century affirms that when reserves were created and treaties signed, they included an inherent right to water.

The right was defined in a 1908 decision when farmers sought to divert for irrigation all the water in the Milk River upstream from Montana's Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. The court ruled that the reservation had a prior right to whatever quantity of water was — or might be in the future — necessary to satisfy the purposes of the two tribes involved. The tribes were allocated almost all the water in the Milk River.

A century later, the aboriginal right to water was amplified when the U.S. government negotiated dramatically expanded water rights for the Navajo that are roughly double all the water allocated to the states of Nevada and Arizona combined.

In Canada, legal scholars such as Merrell-Ann S. Phare and Sharon Venne, a member of Alberta's Blood tribe, say that aboriginal rights to water are entrenched in treaties and in aboriginal title, so the issue cannot be easily — or wisely — ignored by government or business.

Venne, in an essay in Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada, observed that when treaties were negotiated, elders explicitly didn't surrender water rights and treaty commissioners specifically told them that "the water is not what (the Queen) wants."

"If the people were asked to give up their rights to the water, they would be relinquishing their life. Water rights remain within the jurisdiction of indigenous peoples," Venne writes.

That view seems to have been upheld in a B.C. court.

It blocked the building of a marina after the Tsawout First Nation on Vancouver Island objected it would be located in the middle of a traditional fishing area.

“Despite this, the issue is far from settled as cases across Canada make their way through the legal system,” Phare writes in Denying the Source: The Crisis of First Nations Water Rights.

She writes there are at least four sources of indigenous rights to water.

The first — and likely most powerful — is the argument that indigenous peoples had inherent rights to water long before Canada and the provinces were created, and that these rights were never given up anywhere in Canada.

“Water rights and interests of indigenous peoples (having never been extinguished) appear to be guaranteed throughout the western provinces,” Phare argues. And based on the Tsawout decision, she concludes aboriginal water rights “include all aspects of water use and management with which we are familiar in our own lives, including domestic, recreation, navigation, industry, manufacturing, electricity generation, irrigation and flood control.”

So, as climate change increases summer scarcity and intensifies claims on access for domestic, industrial, commercial or conservation use, water is rapidly emerging as an as-yet-poorly defined legal and political issue that promises to affect future negotiation of treaties, land claims and aboriginal rights.

Litigation over the appropriation of water has already resulted in decisions that are transforming the way development proceeds. Taseko’s billion-dollar New Prosperity mine is in limbo because old assumptions about using a lake as containment for tailings clashed with the environmental concerns of the Tsilhqot’in.

Although this is of particular significance to B.C., where the arid Interior faces even greater ecological stress and competing demands for water, it’s also a national issue.

“In many regions, First Nations live with insufficient water allocations and infringements on their aboriginal and treaty rights to water,” the Assembly of First Nations says in a manifesto that outlines growing concern over water rights, the effect of impending climate change, upstream pollution and inadequate access for many communities to both potable water and sanitary waste water disposal.

A federal survey reported in 2011 that 154 First Nations communities in B.C. had water supply, disposal and operational problems sufficiently grave to be rated at high risk.

Like it or not, water allocation and access is moving to the top of a crowded and contentious agenda. Phare makes the case that negotiated agreements are preferable to lawsuits.

Today, the B.C. government has revenue-sharing agreements for 19 First Nations involved in run-of-river hydroelectric projects.

These range from the Taku River Tlingit in the Far North to the Skookum Creek hydro project of the Squamish on the South Coast. On Vancouver Island, run-of-river projects involve the ’Namgis on the Kokish River near Port McNeill and the Hupacasath on China Creek near Port Alberni, where the band has partnered with the private sector and the municipality.

In addition, a $400,000 infusion of capital from the province’s First Nations Clean Energy Business Fund will advance plans for an ocean-based thermal exchange system that will heat a new housing development by the Sci’anew at Beecher Bay, west of the capital.

However, First Nations’ relationship to water extends far beyond legal rights.

Silent as fog shrouding coastal cedars or loud as rivers thundering through mountain canyons, water defines First Nations’ geography and suffuses traditional values, transcending the artificial boundaries of modernity.

The reason water is so deeply embedded in First Nations culture is because the elements, not lines on maps, are what genuinely endure, however much we seek to commodify and own them as economic abstractions.

Perhaps it’s also because water in all its forms — streams and rivers, lakes large and small, oceans surging in and out of fiords and estuaries, glacial ice and snow — makes a powerful metaphor for First Nations’ imagining of their relationship to the land.

“Water is a symbol of our unity as First Nations people,” says Tahltan Rhoda Quock in Sacred Headwaters, renowned anthropologist and ethnobotanist Wade Davis’ account of the struggle to protect the high mountain sources of the Stikine, Skeena and Nass rivers from mining development.

More than 1,800 kilometres to the south, Tim Kulchyski, a fisheries biologist for the Cowichan Tribes, declines to talk in detail about the role of water in his people’s ancient ceremonies.

“Water,” he says. “It’s the centre of so many things, spiritual as well as simple. We don’t talk about the spiritual significance. But one of the things that kept us Cowichans as Cowichans has been the spiritual integrity of the community.”

Take the time to delve into First Nations languages — 32 languages and 59 dialects are spoken in B.C. — and a sense of the sacredness of water imbues almost everything.

From simple physical features, it extends into the myths, legends and stories that define every culture and, of course, it increasingly intrudes into the politics of today and the onrushing future.

The Saanich people take their name from the sight of a sacred mountaintop emerging from the sea to provide refuge during a great flood. Similar flood stories occur with the Tsimshian, the Nisga'a, the Gitxsan and the Cowichan. And water is imbued with supernatural strength — the Skookum — so the Squamish have Skookum Creek, the T'Sou-ke have Skookum Gulch, the Sechelt have Skookumchuck Narrows and the Secwepemc have Skookumchuck Rapids.

Traditional Nuxalk believe each person is born with a nuskelusta — a spiritual wash basin — that resides in the world above ours. That basin is filled with sacred water replete with power. It determines one's fortune in life. River water is akin to that in one's nuskelusta, so boys bathe in the river at dawn while praying to increase the power of the water above.

This belief in the sacredness of water is found everywhere. For the Sechelt, it's xa-?als-ikwu, a bowl-like depression in a large rock on a Gulf Island in which the water is always cold and never diminishes. Drink the water and it will cure sickness and ensure health. For the Nuxalk it is stextekwaitx, a pool that is always full of clear water and any sick person drinking from it will recover.

For the Cowichan Tribes, it's Hw'te shutsun, a spring-fed woodland reserved for ceremonial and sacred activities.

The regional government decided it could be better used as a garbage dump. The Cowichans went to court.

Today the site is protected, a reminder that in negotiating new relationships between government, industry and First Nations, water is increasingly going to be, as Kulchyski says, "at the centre of everything."

Direct Link:
http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/stephen+hume+first+nations+treasure+historic+ties+water/11363642/story.html?__lsa=d8b6-9fcb

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations wants a hold on controversial water diversion project

Published: 15 September 2015

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), Vice Chief Bobby Cameron is calling on the Water Security Agency (WSA) to immediately put on hold the proposed development of the Kutwawagan Creek Water Diversion project until a full study of any potential impacts to First Nations communities is completed and the Province has undertaken proper consultation and accommodation.

”The Water Security Agency currently does not have the necessary information to accurately assess whether there is a potential for adverse impacts to our Treaty and S.35 rights,” states Vice Chief Bobby Cameron. “There are 16 First Nations within the region of the Quill Lakes, Last Mountain Lake and Lower Qu’Appelle Valley whose Treaty and Inherent hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering rights could be directly impacted by this project. The Saskatchewan government should not proceed without having the proper information and a plan to mitigate any impacts this project would have on the rights of these First Nations.”

At the current high water levels there is an increased risk of Big Quill Lake filling to its spill point resulting in saline water from Big Quill Lake flowing downstream towards Last Mountain Lake. The proposed Kutawagan Creek Diversion project includes construction of a berm isolating Big Quill Lake from the area to the southwest. The project also proposes to construct a channel and outlet structure by the natural spill point. This proposed project is designed to divert water from entering Big Quill by isolating the Kutawagan Creek region from Big Quill Lake and providing an outlet towards Last Mountain Lake. Water flowing south from the project would be from the Kutawagan Creek area, which has lower salinity than that of Big Quill Lake.

“We are deeply concerned that the WSA is planning to begin construction on this project in the Fall of 2015 without first having an environmental assessment in place to determine what the effects of the project will be on the fish habitats and the hay lands of the First Nations in the Lower Qu’Appelle Valley,” adds Vice Chief Bobby Cameron. “The WSA must immediately put this project on hold until the First Nations have the opportunity to determine what these impacts will be and how the WSA plans to accommodate First Nations’ Treaty and S.35 rights.”

The FSIN will be requesting a meeting between the WSA and the affected First Nations to discuss these matters.

Direct Link: http://www.620ckrm.com/ckrm-on-air/ckrm-local-news/12428-federation-of-saskatchewan-indian-nations-wants-a-hold-on-controversial-water-diversion-project

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Access to pristine island at stake in First Nations deal

Philip Edward Island, popular with tourists and Georgian Bay locals, to change hands in proposed deal.

John Manitowabi, right, from Wiikwemkoong talks in Toronto about access to a part of the proposed settlement area Thursday with a man that has a hunt camp near the affected area.

By: Jacques Gallant Staff Reporter, Published on Thu Sep 10 2015

As an agreement looms over the transfer of territory in northern Georgian Bay to the local First Nations community, cottagers and tourists are expressing concern that their access to a pristine piece of Crown land may soon be cut off.

On the one hand, a spokeswoman for the provincial Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs told the Star that Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory plans to develop some of the land on Philip Edward Island — uninhabited Crown land popular with tourists, including Torontonians — as parks, for the continued use of the general public.

But Wiikwemkoong 's chief said in an interview that a "final determination" on access has not yet been made and will be left up to members of his community.

Ratification of the proposed agreement over the territory, located 100 km south of Sudbury, is expected within the next 18 to 24 months. The government is now in a consultation period and hosting open houses, including one in Toronto on Thursday.

“Recreational use of the islands in Georgian Bay that are proposed to be transferred to Wiikwemkoong , including the Philip Edward Island archipelago, would require the permission of the First Nation,” said Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs spokeswoman Flavia Mussio in an email.

“The provincial Crown land would be transferred to the First Nation in fee simple, meaning Wiikwemkoong would own the land as a private landowner.”

Negotiations have been taking place for almost a decade, and the government says that an eventual agreement is expected to include both financial compensation and transfer of lands.

Wiikwemkoong has set aside legal action dating back to 1997 while the negotiations are ongoing. That civil action includes 23,000 islands, according to government documents, which said the proposed settlement agreement would deal with the central portion of the litigation.

According to the government, it’s been proposed that 17,500-acre Philip Edward Island, as well as some territory on the mainland, will be transferred to Wiikwemkoong instead of other islands that form part of the First Nation claim because they are private lands that cannot be returned. Those lands include Fitzwilliam Island, just off the coast of Manitoulin Island.

An association that represents dozen of cottagers in the area has said it is concerned with the relatively quick pace of the public consultation period, and is encouraging residents and property owners to write to the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

“The association’s goal is to maintain future access to Philip Edward and surrounding islands for all Ontarians and First Nations,” said Northern Georgian Bay Association board member Robert Nairn.

“For many years now, thousands of campers have visited the island, and effectively it’s been treated as a park . . . We know there’s access now. We don’t know for certain if there will be access in the future. That’s an unknown because of the ongoing negotiations that we’re not privy to.”

Wiikwemkoong ’s chief told the Star in an interview that there is still much up for discussion among members of his community. Ogimaa Duke Peltier said options about access include allowing anyone on the island.

“Yes, we’d like to settle this tomorrow, but we also understand that Ontario has its process to ensure that the public is aware that they are making efforts to return lands that were alienated from the unceded territory of Wiikwemkoong ,” he said.

Correction – September 11, 2015*: This article was edited from a previous version that misspelled Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory.*

Direct Link: http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/09/10/access-to-pristine-island-at-stake-in-first-nations-deal.html

BC's Hard Hat Premier Builds Faulty First Nation Bridges

Twisted and uneven, Clark's reconciliation words betray 'brute force' development actions.

By Ian Gill, 12 Sep 2015, TheTyee.ca

It's hard to reconcile Premier Christy Clark's feel-good talk with her government's refusal to honour aboriginal rights. Photo: Flickr.

Another week and another bravura demonstration by our premier, Christy Clark. When it comes to levelling with First Nations people in British Columbia, she's at least a bubble and a half off plumb.

For someone who styles herself as our province's tradesperson-in-chief -- her love of safety jackets, work boots and hard hats borders on the kinky, and in her endless promotion of skills training she achieves almost religious rapture -- it is passing strange that there are no straight lines to be found in the house that Christy's building, and there is even less straight talk.

"We are done with approaches where the government of B.C. is telling you what's good for your communities," Clark told assembled chiefs and other First Nation leaders at the wrap-up of this week's second annual B.C. Cabinet and First Nations Leaders' Gathering in Vancouver. Clark, paraphrasing a chief she'd met during the gathering, made much of the notion that First Nations derive their culture from the land, and that without the land, they "are nothing." She committed to creating a "First Nations-shaped economy" that would, among other things, "honour B.C.'s long tradition of protecting our environment." All this in service of "one value we all share … our love for our children."

Cue the announcement of that urgently sought and desperately needed gesture on the province's part, a new Premier's Award for Aboriginal Youth Athletic Achievement, and a Parliamentary Secretary assigned to make it happen a year from now.

Somehow, it was hard to reconcile that announcement with what the Canadian Press, reporting on the previous day's meeting between the cabinet and the chiefs, described as the "chasm that exists between British Columbia's political and aboriginal leaders." The reliably straight-shooting president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, told CP the government has one more year to figure out what reconciliation really looks like, failing which "it will be back to the courts and pretty much back to the barricades. We need a legislative framework and a policy framework we can rely on that allows us to reconcile aboriginal rights and interests and other Crown and industry interests," Chief Phillip said on Wednesday. "We don't have that." But by Thursday, the chiefs at least had a promise that a year from now, the government will be ready to give out awards for shot put, or the long jump, or better yet, the marathon.

Court-affirmed 'certainty'

As for the real business confronting the province, and for all the feel-good talk about reconciliation and families, Clark and her cabinet confront the inalienable fact that, as one aboriginal observer told me recently, the "Crown" no longer has any more special a claim to unceded lands in B.C. than the First Nations communities that never ceded them in the first place. In fact, the Crown may have no claim at all.

Since about six per cent of B.C. is land held in fee-simple that First Nations have agreed not to claim back in treaty negotiations (although compensation may still be due, depending on the nature of its alienation), that leaves about 94 per cent of B.C. that is considered by the government to be "Crown" land. But in the eyes of First Nations, these are, effectively, unceded "aboriginal title" lands over which, increasingly, the burden now falls on Victoria to prove its authority to further alienate (or develop) lands that don't belong to the Crown and never have.

This is a problem when the government's business model amounts to what Joan Didion once called the "subsidized monopolization" of the state, in which governments "(build) the dams and the weirs and the railroads that made the state economically exploitable, public money spent on behalf of private business." Which is exactly what the B.C. model has been for as long as anyone can remember, and which has worked -- after a fashion, and only for a few -- for as long as the Crown has been able to exert ownership control over resources, and while any First Nations claims to the contrary have been considered mere assertions of an alternative to Crown jurisdiction.

That all changed last year with the Tsilhqot'in decision, a ruling of such fundamental import that it frightened Christy Clark into calling the first of these so-called "all chiefs" meetings in September last year. When the Supreme Court of Canada ruled two months earlier that the Tsilhqot'in had *actual* title to *actual* lands that, the court agreed, they originally owned, still occupied, and had never surrendered, the province shuddered, and

rightly so. "The decision provides additional certainty," Attorney-General Suzanne Anton disingenuously said at the time, given that the most fundamental business asset the government possessed, certainty, had just changed hands.

All this might have been avoided when the settlers first arrived in B.C., had they heeded the orders of King George III, whose proclamation of 1763 enjoined settlers to ensure there was consent on the part of aboriginal people, and compensation paid for any lands and resources taken, upon the signing of treaties. In the settlement of British Columbia, that happened in only a few instances before the resource lust of the settlers ran ahead of the bureaucrats and left what's since been called a "gaping hole in the colonizers' paperwork." It remained unfinished business when B.C. entered Confederation in 1871 and it came back to haunt Canada and B.C. a century later as First Nations communities began to recover from sustained attempts to eradicate them altogether.

The *Tsilhqot'in* case is one of about 200 land rights cases that Canada's aboriginal people have launched, and mostly won, over the past few decades. But those "wins" have proven mostly Pyrrhic. Title, after all, was at the heart of the *Calder* case that the Nisga'a and Thomas Berger launched back in 1969 (a split decision of the Supreme Court in 1973 gave sufficient encouragement to the Nisga'a for them to arrive at a treaty, finally, in 2000). In 1997, the *Delgamuukw* case brought by the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en found that aboriginal title had not been extinguished and was, in fact, "a burden on Crown title." The court added: "There is always a duty of consultation."

The B.C. government, for all practical purposes, ignored the court. It continued to develop the province as it, and its industry partners, saw fit. (In fact, it still does). So it was that the Haida, outraged at the ongoing issuance of logging permits over their sustained objections, sued the province and won. The Supreme Court ruled in *Haida* in 2004 that the province had failed in its duty to consult and accommodate the Haida, whose mere assertion of rights and title was sufficient to trigger that duty (though the court did not confer a development veto on the Haida).

You would think that by then, the province would have got the hint, but a 2012 report presented at a Canadian Institute conference on consultation and accommodation said that, despite the clarity provided by *Haida*, "the law on consultation continues to evolve on an incremental basis," which of course suited the province just fine.

Nations in waiting

Meanwhile, the West Moberly First Nation, the Nlaka'pamux Tribal Council, the Fort Nelson First Nation, the Da'naxda'wx/Awaetlala First Nation, the Halalt First Nation, the Upper Nicola Indian Band, the Stellat'en First Nation, the Adams Lake Indian Band, the Neskonlith Indian Band, the Kwicksutaineuk Ah-Kwa-Mish First Nation and the Tsilhqot'in Nation were all in court on issues ranging from permits for coal mines, for clear cut logging, rights to hunt and trap game, an environmental assessment of a landfill, expansion of a conservation area, groundwater extraction, transmission line construction, upgrades to a molybdenum mine, incorporation of the Sun Peaks ski resort as a

municipality, construction of a shopping centre, permitting of fish farms, and the biggest mother of them all -- the claim by the Xeni Gwet'in people of the Nemiah Valley to title of all 800,000 hectares of their traditional territory.

That case, *Tsilhqot'in*, also known as the William case after Chief Roger William, was decided last year and the government has been on the back foot ever since, confronted by a ruling that theoretically lifts that old hippie saw -- "It's all aboriginal land" -- off a bumper sticker on a VW bus and onto the statute books of the land.

But there's the rub. For government, and even some chiefs, it is far too radical a notion to contemplate that the entire foundation of our province is built on a fiction -- some might say an outright lie -- and so it is little wonder that Clark and her cabinet would rather talk than actually enact the sort of changes that the William decision portends. Clark was happy this week to support a 12-page document that touts "achieving predictability and stability in the economy" as a central tenet of reconciliation, and fair enough, if you are content with motherhood statements of principle.

But in practice, how to account for the government's behaviour towards the West Moberly First Nation over that hardly inconsequential matter of the biggest infrastructure project in the history of B.C., the Site C dam? If the raft of court cases and the stack of favourable decisions are to mean anything, then surely Site C is the acid test.

After her feel-good wrap-up on Thursday, I asked the premier how she reconciles talk of a "First Nations-shaped economy" with the outright opposition to Site C that has been expressed by the West Moberly First Nation. Chief Roland Willson, whose band seeks a stop-work order to prevent early work on the $9 billion hydroelectric project on the Peace River, said the province approved permits for land clearing and road building earlier this year *before* consulting the West Moberly. He described the province's so-called consultation a "farce."

"We disagree on that," Clark said on Thursday. "We have consulted adequately, more than adequately," she told me, claiming that the province had "met the requirements of the law… I don't believe there wasn't consultation because there was." Willson doesn't dispute that there was, in the end, consultation -- meetings held, emails exchanged -- but he said it's the content and the intent that counts. "They just let us blow off steam and then go ahead with their plans anyway," he said in an interview. They came to consult "with no intent to do anything other than building Site C."

The province, of course, claims that the project is in the larger interest of B.C. It will create jobs and power the equivalent of 450,000 homes, it says. As to protecting a territory without which, to quote the premier, the local aboriginal people "are nothing," kiss goodbye to more than 300 culturally important locations in a 5,000-hectare flood zone, including multiple gravesites. "It's going to cause a lot of grief among aboriginal people," Gerry Attachie, whose grandfather was one of seven chiefs who signed Treaty 8 in 1899, told the *Globe and Mail* last month. "This will be under water. We'll never see it again."

What is particularly galling in this case is that the West Moberly and several other bands in the Peace River region actually *have* one of the very few treaties signed back in the settlement era in B.C., and that treaty is supposed to guarantee their rights to traditional practices that depend on the very places that will be inundated by Site C. So the West Moberly, whose bid to force the province to stop work was turned down by the courts in late August (the band is appealing that decision), is also suing the federal government for infringing on its title. "If the federal government does not have to take into account infringement," Willson told me, "there's no point in having treaties."

Willson decries Clark's sweet talk about reconciliation as posturing, pure and simple. The decision to build Site C was made in Gordon Campbell's day, he claims, and it's as if none of the court victories since ever happened. "There's nothing to force them to do anything other than sit there and listen," and then go do what they want to do anyway. Site C. LNG. You name it. And all because Christy Clark, and for that matter John Horgan, and all the pretenders currently jockeying for the keys to the Prime Minister's Office, are working with a broken development model in Canada whose time is up.

WAC Bennett-era vision

Large dam projects like Site C are "brute force, Industrial Age artefacts that rarely deliver what they promise," author Jacques Leslie wrote in a *New York Times* opinion piece last year. He cited a "stunning" Oxford University study published in March, 2014 in *Energy Policy*, that said "the actual construction costs of large dams are too high to yield a positive return" -- and that's without taking into account social and environmental impacts, "which are almost invariably negative and frequently vast… Instead of building enormous, one-of-a-kind edifices like large dams, the study's authors recommend 'agile alternatives' like wind, solar and mini-hydropower facilities."

Just such alternatives have been proposed in place of Site C, with a report by Clean Energy B.C. showing that the province could save $1 billion over the projected life of Site C by pursuing myriad smaller alternatives that would generate just as much power. As Roland Willson told me, "We're not opposed to the creation of that energy. We're just opposed to destroying that valley." But Christy Clark -- a sort of latter-day mini-me to Wacky Bennett -- has her feet, and her head, planted deeply in the 1950s. Maybe she thinks they'll even rename Site C after her, honour her legacy as a great builder in the Bennett tradition, with her very own Christina J. Clark Dam.

Clark is clearly not deaf to the entreaties of B.C.'s aboriginal people, but she's not dumb either. Her corporate sponsors demand of her that she walk a political and diplomatic tightrope with the chiefs and that she gives them just enough to keep them in play.

But time is running out. In Stewart Phillip's opinion, the government is currently at "strike two," and it's hard to imagine that handing out youth sports medals a year from now is going to keep Christy at the plate. What this week revealed, and what her actions underline when it comes to Site C, is that Clark's government is confused and conflicted and lacks either the moral courage, or the vision, or both, to reconcile honourably with

B.C.'s First Nations. Deaf? No. Dumb? Far from it. Visionary? On that score, she's as blind as a welder's dog.

Direct Link: http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2015/09/12/Premier-Builds-Faulty-First-Nation-Bridges/

Chief optimistic for action

by Richard Rolke - Vernon Morning Star

posted Sep 13, 2015 at 1:00 AM

The chief of the Okanagan Indian Band is hopeful a new relationship between First Nations and the provincial government is unfolding.

Byron Louis attended meetings between 500 aboriginal leaders and the B.C. cabinet in Vancouver Wednesday and Thursday.

“There’s an understanding that the status quo is unacceptable,” he said.

“The province recognizes that and First Nations recognize that but it’s a case of overcoming years of misunderstanding.”

A framework document has the government and First Nations Leadership Council trying to establish a reconciliation agreement that would resolve land claims across the province.

Louis says the government’s actions will be watched closely.

“Sincerity is nice but we need evidence on the ground,” he said.

One of the matters to be resolved is the development of resources, whether it’s oil or timber.

“I have to be optimistic and there is some understanding of development of First Nations economies on the ground and the benefits to local, regional and provincial coffers,” said Louis.

“If we make any progress, it will be through the lens of economic development.”

During the meetings, the Interior Alliance, which represents four nations, including the Okanagan and Shuswap, put the government on notice.

“We are prepared to take direct action to protect our traditional lands from ongoing exploitation without our consent,” states the release.

“We anticipate that such direct action would disrupt the provincial economy as well as the global economy until such time as title and rights are implemented and we are treated fairly, including, being engaged in meaningful land and resource management regimes, based on our traditional laws of the land.”

The Okanagan Indian Band is not part of the alliance and Louis isn’t sure if his community would participate in any actions initiated.

“We are waiting to see what comes out of it,” he said of the Interior Alliance process.

“With the Interior Alliance, it (participation) has to be a decision of our band and the seven bands of the Okanagan Nation Alliance.”

Direct Link: http://www.vernonmorningstar.com/news/326802491.html

FSIN wants project 'put on hold'

By Nathan Liewicki, Leader-Post September 16, 2015

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) claims the Water Security Agency (WSA) does not have the necessary information needed to accurately assess the impact the proposed development of the Kutawagan Creek diversion project will have on First Nations communities in the Quill Lakes region.

"There are 16 First Nations within the region of the Quill Lakes, Last Mountain Lake and Lower Qu'Appelle Valley whose treaty and inherent hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering rights could be directly impacted by this project," vice chief Bobby Cameron said in a news release Tuesday.

The FSIN believes current high water levels pose an increased risk to Big Quill Lake filling to its spill point, which would result in saline water flowing downstream towards Last Mountain Lake.

They are "deeply concerned" the WSA is planning to begin construction on the project this fall without conducting an environmental assessment to determine what effects the project might have on the lands in the region.

Cameron said the project should be "put on hold" until First Nations have an opportunity to determine what the impacts will be.

WSA spokesman Patrick Boyle said the agency has met with several community and organizational groups that could be affected by the project. He added that letters have been sent out to 16 area First Nations explaining the project, and that only one has responded.

"We've just finished our open houses and other stakeholder meetings, which we gained some public feedback on," Boyle said. "All of the information is still being gathered at this point."

He admitted, however, that many people have raised concerns about the salinity of the water that could flow should the project be approved.

The FSIN will request a meeting with the WSA and affected First Nations to discuss the project.

Direct Link:
http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/fsin+wants+project+hold/11367020/story.html

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

OPP preparing list of missing/murdered aboriginal men & women

Posted: September 11, 2015 06:39:34 AM
Category: Canada & The World, Ontario
Tags: cold case, crime, investigation, police

Provincial police are gearing up to issue a report on missing and murdered aboriginal people.

Superintendent Mark Pritchard, the commander of the OPP's aboriginal policing bureau says police have been compiling the list of cases for about three years.

While there has been much focus on missing and murdered aboriginal women, the OPP say there will also be men on the list.

The trails of many cases have gone cold and a lot of killers are no longer being sought.

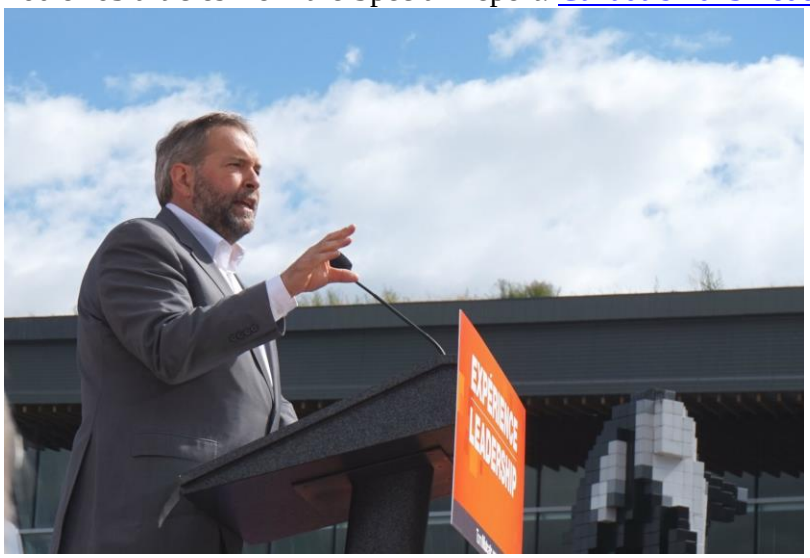
The OPP hopes that fresh eyes, new technology and investigative techniques will help solve some of these cases.

According to the RCMP there have been over 1200 cases of missing and murdered aboriginals between 1980 and 2014.

Direct Link: http://www.chch.com/opp-preparing-list-of-missingmurdered-aboriginal-men-women/

Mulcair insists on inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women

By Fram Dinshaw in News, Politics | September 13th 2015
#60 of 63 articles from the Special Report: Canada's 2015 Federal Election Campaign



Thomas Mulcair in campaign mode during his Vancouver rally on Sept. 13 (credit: Jenny Uechi).

Thomas Mulcair pledged once again to launch a national inquiry into Canada's more than 1,200 murdered and missing Indigenous women at a campaign rally in Vancouver on Sept. 13 just 36 days before Canada's 2015 federal election.

"I stand committed to launching an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women....because we believe Indigenous lives matter," he said, to loud cheers from his audience.

Mulcair kept up the pressure on Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who has consistently ignored demands for an inquiry into the hundreds killed or missing, who said last year that the issue "isn't really high on our radar, to be honest."

From Harper's first election in 2006 to May 2015, nearly 300 Indigenous women have been murdered, died under suspicious circumstances, or have gone missing, according to data collected for the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network by researcher Maryanne Pearce.

Presently, First Nations women make up one in four female murder victims nationally, despite constituting just 2 per cent of Canada's total population.

Mulcair has previously promised an inquiry into the cases of murdered and missing women within 100 days of an NDP government taking office, as well as pledging to end violence against women, one year after the slaying of Winnipeg teen Tina Fontaine.

But Canada is now facing international pressure for its failure to combat violence against First Nations women, most recently from a damning United Nations report released by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights over the summer, which re-iterated calls for a national inquiry.

"The State party should, as a matter of priority, (a) address the issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls by conducting a national inquiry, as called for by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, in consultation with indigenous women's organizations and families of the victims; (b) review its legislation at the federal, provincial and territorial levels, and coordinate police responses across the country, with a view to preventing the occurrence of such murders and disappearances; (c) investigate, prosecute, and punish the perpetrators and provide reparation to victims; and (d) address the root causes of violence against indigenous women and girls," stated the report.

More Syrian refugees to Canada

But Mulcair and his rivals also face pressure of a different kind: that of four million Syrian war refugees, many of whom are streaming into Europe in their thousands, while some have Canada in mind as a safe haven.

Mulcair said Canadians need a "Prime minister who understands the urgency to act as crises unfold" and said Canada under the NDP would welcome 46,000 Syrian refugees over the next four years, thereby fulfilling its United Nations obligations.

So far, less than 2,400 Syrians have been admitted into Canada since civil war first broke out in 2011.

Germany by contrast is expecting to take in 800,000 refugees by the end of this year and many have already made the hazardous journey through Turkey, the Balkans, and central Europe to reach sanctuary, braving rough seas, hostile border guards, and hunger to escape their war-torn country.

Talk of a greener future…but no promises just two months before Paris talks

On climate change, Mulcair did not list specific actions, but said he would improve Canada's policies on climate change, which many argue have stalled since Stephen Harper took office.

"I believe in taking action on climate change today, so we don't leave an environmental debt to our children," said Mulcair.

Mulcair once again avoided committing to any concrete greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, just two months before the Conference of Parties (COP) 21 talks in Paris are due to begin.

Speaking at the Aug. 6 Leaders' Debate in Toronto, Mulcair vowed to play a constructive role in Paris if elected prime minister, but did not mention any emissions target.

But the NDP has promised to shift federal subsidies from oil sands industries to renewable energy and clean technology development, as well as taxing polluters for the environmental damage they cause.

Mulcair has also promised proper consultation and study before approving any major energy project such as Kinder Morgan's proposed Trans Mountain expansion between Edmonton and Burnaby.

A leg-up for the poor and seniors

Returning to more 'bread and butter' domestic issues, Mulcair restated his party's promise to roll out a $15 minimum wage to help lift working families out of poverty, alongside new taxes for the wealthy.

"I stand for a $15 minimum wage," said Mulcair, adding that people working full-time hours should not have to live in poverty.

Mulcair also promised that if an NDP government were elected, he would close a tax loophole loophole so that the wealthy would contribute tax dollars toward programs for feeding hungry children.

"Just a few months ago at the Broadbent Institute I got a chance to talk about tax loopholes, and the rich. Right now, there are a select few who benefit from a tax loophole for stock options. At the same time, in our country, hundreds of thousands of children will go to school without having eaten."

The NDP leader then attacked Harper for cutting federal health transfers, also taking a swipe at his Liberal predecessors for slashing billion in such transfers during the 1990s.

Mulcair also made his pitch to seniors and those Canadians struggling to access affordable medicines and mental health care.

"We're going to be focusing on four key elements - improving care for seniors, improving access to care at home, a comprehensive national strategy on mental health, and reducing the cost of medication," said Mulcair to cheers. "We will relieve pressure on overcrowded hospitals so they can provide emergency care to those who need it most."

Direct Link: http://www.nationalobserver.com/2015/09/13/news/mulcair-insists-inquiry-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women

Red Deer joins communities urging missing aboriginal women inquiry

Elder Eugene Harry of the Squamish Nation looks at a poster of missing women prior to performing a ceremonial blessing at the start of the missing women inquiry in downtown Vancouver, Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011. (Jonathan Hayward / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

The Canadian Press
Published Tuesday, September 15, 2015 1:11PM EDT

RED DEER, Alta. -- The City of Red Deer, Alta., has joined other municipalities in calling for a national inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women in Canada.

Coun. Dianne Wyntjes says it is important to take action to let the federal government know that it must be accountable.

Mayor Tara Veer says ultimately everyone has a responsibility to safeguard and bring a voice to those who are voiceless.

In 2014, RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson said nearly 1,200 aboriginal women have been murdered or gone missing in Canada in the last three decades.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is asking the federal government to hold a comprehensive, independent national inquiry into the missing and murdered women.

The Conservative government has steadfastly refused to call such an inquiry.

Direct Link: http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/red-deer-joins-communities-urging-missing-aboriginal-women-inquiry-1.2564319

RCMP search for aboriginal Nova Scotia woman reported missing

Samantha Frost, shown in these RCMP handout photos, was reported missing from Nova Scotia on Sept. 15. She was last heard from Aug. 3, when she indicated on Facebook that she was at a music festival in Toronto.

The Canadian Press
Published Thursday, September 17, 2015 5:35PM EDT

GREENWOOD, N.S. - RCMP in Nova Scotia are asking for public assistance in their search for a young aboriginal woman reported missing.

Police say 21-year-old Samantha Frost was last heard from Aug. 3 when she indicated in a Facebook post that she was at a music festival in Toronto.

Frost was reported missing to police on Tuesday.

The Mounties say their investigation has determined Frost may be travelling to Nova Scotia or New Brunswick and that she does not have a vehicle.

Police say it's out of character for her to be out of contact with her family for so long.

Frost is described as five feet eight inches tall with brown hair and a slender build and she also has a large tattoo on her back of angel wings and two large tattoos on her upper thighs.

Direct Link: http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/rcmp-search-for-aboriginal-nova-scotia-woman-reported-missing-1.2568672

Special Topic: Residential Schools & '60s Scoop

Truth and Reconciliation in education: a beginning

By Carmel Kilkenny | english@rcinet.ca
Sunday 13 September, 2015

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was a massive undertaking emotionally, physically and psychologically for Canada's aboriginal people's. And it has opened the eyes of many non-aboriginal Canadians to the horrifying history and legacy of colonial attitudes and efforts to "take the Indian out of the child."

This was the guiding principle from 1876 until 1996 when the last residential school closed. At the peak, there were 80 schools across Canada and over 150,000 children walked through the doors. Some children recieved an education and were able to make a life, but for the majority, the experience was one of cruel abuse and hardship, that broke the bonds between parent and child. 4,000 children died during their stays.

The TRC heard the stories of the most recent generation, some of these people speaking of their suffering for the first time in their lives. Now, following government apologies and ongoing efforts to make financial amends, one of the 'Calls to Action' in the ensuing report, is to integrate this truth into Canada's history books and classes.

Under the section titled: Education for Reconciliation, the report states: **"We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to: i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students."**

Charlene Bearhead is the Education Lead for the National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba. She says the educational element in the reconciliation process, "is our collective opportunity to teach and raise our children

across this country to acknowlege, recognize and respect the truth about residential schools and the history of colonialism and the history of aboriginal people in this country and our collective history,"

She says, "It also gives us the opportunity to teach and instill those understandings and values of reconciliation and what that really means as far as respectful relationships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people."

"This weaving of this truth and this story into curriculum that is mandatory for all children in all grades and not specifically for aboriginal children or specific groups but this is our collective history."

Now there is plenty of material in the wake of the six years of the Truth and Reconciliation comission hearings. Charlene Bearhead says, "We have this opportunity now as educators to develop resources, to develop teacher-professional development, to develop curriculum."

And it is happening. "This has been an extremely busy summer; already every place I go people have been saying how can we do our part for these calls for action?" She has witnessed what teachers doing in their classroom, provincial ministries of education are educating themselves and preparing. The British Columbia Teacher's Federation has released an e-book they are implementing.

"All across the country people are acting now"

A section of the cover of Nicola Campbell's award-winning book, Shin-chi's Canoe

When I ask Charlene Bearhead about the challenge of educating children in kindergarten about such painful subjects, mindful of the irony that the residential schools took the children at the same age, she says there are always ways to share the story. And that to delay the truth, leaves the children indignant about not knowing, at a later age.

Bearhead cites books like Nicola Campbell's, titled "Shin-chi's Canoe". In both Campbell's story and Kim LaFave's images, it shares the experience in a way five year-olds can understand.

The legacy of a century and a half of misguided and cruel attempts to 'remove the Indian from the child' have caused such social damage, but in educating all Canadians to the truth of our history it is hoped bridges can be built to create the understanding and healing that will reconcile us all with the past.

Direct Link: http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2015/09/13/truth-and-reconciliation-in-education-a-beginning/

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

Pope Francis to declare Spanish priest a saint, but some Native Americans beg to differ

By Sarah Pulliam Bailey September 12

When Pope Francis canonizes the 18th-century Spanish missionary Junipero Serra on Sept. 23 in Washington — the first canonization on U.S. soil — he will declare Serra to be enrolled among the saints and "to be venerated as such by the whole church."

For many Native Americans, however, Serra is no saint. The Indians who joined the missions Serra built were forced to shed their own culture, including their religion, dress and food. Thousands of them died prematurely from diseases common in Europe.

"It will be a day of mourning for our people," says Valentin Lopez, chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, located along the central coast of Monterey Bay in California.

Lopez said he will be cutting his own long black hair short as a visible sign of his mourning. He and other Native Americans point to Serra's leadership over a mission system in which many were abused and died. Serra "has to be recognized as the architect of the system," Lopez said.

Serra, a Franciscan theologian who established Catholic missions along the coast of California as he marched north with Spanish conquistadors, has long been treated as a heroic figure by California leaders. A statue of him has stood in the U.S. Capitol — where each state is allowed two statues — since 1931. At the time, Sen. Hiram Johnson (R-Calif.) described him as "a pioneer of pioneers, bringing Christian civilization to the primitive and savage land, now a wondrous empire." Some historians cite Serra's dedication to Native Americans, while others say he oversaw and even contributed to a system that mistreated tribes.

Visitors view the altar and Junipero Serra's resting place in the Carmel Mission Basilica. Pope Francis will canonize Serra on Sept. 23 at a Mass in the District. (Michael Fiala/Reuters)

"He was one of the founding fathers of the United States, a saintly example of the church's universality," the pope said of Serra in February.

Few Catholic Church observers expected the pontiff's announcement in January that Serra would be canonized. For one thing, Serra is credited with only one miracle when saints usually need two (the pontiff says that Serra's life serves as a second miracle).

Francis has fast-tracked several candidates for sainthood, already canonizing 21 individuals and hundreds of martyrs in just over two years as pontiff. Saints play an important role in the Catholic Church, as the church teaches that the faithful can directly pray to saints to intercede with God. The precise number of saints is unknown, though experts say it is within the thousands.

Francis's decision to canonize Serra will be a gesture to Hispanic Catholics, and the tickets for about 25,000 people to attend the Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception will go primarily to Hispanic Catholics from the D.C. area. The pope will celebrate the Mass in Spanish.

Serra was a pivotal force in the Spanish conquest and colonization of California, said Steven Hackel, a history professor at the University of California at Riverside and author of a biography of Serra.

"He's our Columbus or our Cortéz, the one who, right or wrong, for better or for worse, gets all the blame and glory in California," Hackel said. "He's a convenient symbol of everything."

Serra is credited with bringing literacy, economy and agriculture to the state. "The conventional wisdom was that he saved the Indians, especially from the Spanish military at the time," Hackel said.

A painting of Junipero Serra is displayed above his grave in the Carmel Mission Basilica in Carmel, Calif., in May 2015. (David Royal/The Monterey County Herald via AP, File) (David Royal/AP)

Historians have documented the exploitation of the natives by Catholic missionaries and European monarchies, especially Spanish conquistadors. In July, during a visit to Bolivia, Francis offered an apology for actions of the church during colonialism.

"I say this to you with regret: Many grave sins were committed against the native people of America in the name of God," he said. "I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offense of the church herself, but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America."

Lopez says these comments don't square with the upcoming canonization plans.

"How can he give a blanket apology like that and at the same time canonize Junipero Serra?" Lopez said. "To do so shows hypocrisy and shows the apology is disingenuous."

Lopez's tribe has sent six letters to the pope protesting the canonization. Lopez received a letter from Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the Vatican's representative to the United Nations, who responded with a historical note the Catholic Church issued in 1988 when the church defended the beatification of Serra by Pope John Paul II. The note said that after convening a report from historians and anthropologists, it was possible to move forward "with soothed consciences" to his beatification.

Many public schoolchildren in California are taught about Spanish exploration and colonization of the state, but it is up to the teacher how to portray the relationships among soldiers, missionaries such as Serra and Indians. The Rev. Jaime Soto, bishop of Sacramento and president of the California Catholic Conference, announced on Sept. 4 that the bishops will review Catholic schools' third- and fourth-grade curriculum to "better reflect modern understandings" of what happened. He said the church would also revise displays at state missions, saying that "the Indian experience has been ignored or denied."

Serra began to get additional attention in 2013, the 300th anniversary of his birth. Still, there wasn't much talk about him until the pope made his announcement earlier this year, sparking debate about Serra's role in the abuse and deaths of Native Americans. Of the 80,000 Indians baptized in the missions between 1769 and the mid-1830s, about 60,000 died "by the latter period," many from disease, Hackel said.

Historians say there is no evidence that Serra abused any Native Americans himself, but he oversaw people who performed whippings and defended that punishment for Indians who tried to escape the mission.

"He believed the church had the authority and power to punish Indians with blows," Hackel said. "They were his spiritual children, because [missionaries] had brought them in the church."

Nearly 10,000 people have signed a MoveOn.org petition asking Francis to reconsider his canonization plans.

“Spanish Priests did little to recognize indigenous people as humans and did not come to their rescue when women were raped by soldiers and settlers,” the petition states. “With an over 90% indigenous mortality rate, Serra hardly ‘saved many souls.’ ”

Serra is sometimes lumped in with other colonialists of his time, said Gregory Orfalea, author of “Journey to the Sun: Junipero Serra’s Dream and the Founding of California.” Serra regularly defended Native Americans against the Spanish military, Orfalea said.

“The protesters are painting with a broad brush, and tar and feathering Serra along with colonialism,” Orfalea said. “There is plenty of room for protests about colonialism, but this particular man stands out against the worst violations of the colonizers.”

Born on Majorca in 1713, Serra was a theological professor before he decided to become a missionary in 1749 when he traveled to Mexico. He established the Mission San Diego de Alcalá in California in 1769, ahead of much of the Western expansion of the United States.

He argued with the Spanish army over who should hold authority over the Indians, opposing military advances that many say would have caused worse conditions for the natives. Serra thought missions could protect Indian converts from soldiers, miners or others who could bring violence or disease. He established and oversaw nine missions in California before his death in 1784.

Father Marc Lindeijer, a senior church official in Rome who compiles cases and serves as an advocate for prospective saints, said it is “not completely new” to canonize controversial figures. He cited, for instance, the canonization in 2002 of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, a Spanish priest and founder of the conservative Opus Dei organization who also stood accused of supporting right-wing movements, including the dictatorship of Spain’s Gen. Francisco Franco. “Sometimes there is a prejudice due to lack of information, but there is also the question of looking at someone during the spirit of their age, like Serra,” Lindeijer said. “It’s only afterwards that you would look back and say, ‘I don’t think we would have done it this way.’ Even saints sin. But the virtues outweigh the sins.”

The pope has called Serra “a great evangelizer,” probably fitting with the Catholic Church’s emphasis on “the new evangelization,” an effort launched by Pope Benedict XVI to further the teachings of the church.

Archbishop José Gómez of Los Angeles has suggested that Serra was one of the first people in the Americas, maybe even in the Catholic Church, to argue against the death penalty. After a 1775 attack by California natives on the San Diego mission, Serra told Spanish authorities to spare the lives of those who had killed several people.

“The fact that there were some abuses at that time doesn’t take away the fact that Junipero Serra dedicated his life totally to the service of people,” Gómez told reporters at the Religion Newswriters Association meeting on Aug. 28.

Serra is being canonized because he was holy, not because he was perfect, historian Robert Senkewicz argued at a news conference in April hosted by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

“My sense is that people are not canonized because they are perfect — otherwise, presumably, St. Peter would never have been canonized,” he said, according to Catholic News Service. “They are canonized because they made a commitment which, on balance, had more good than non-good associated with it.”

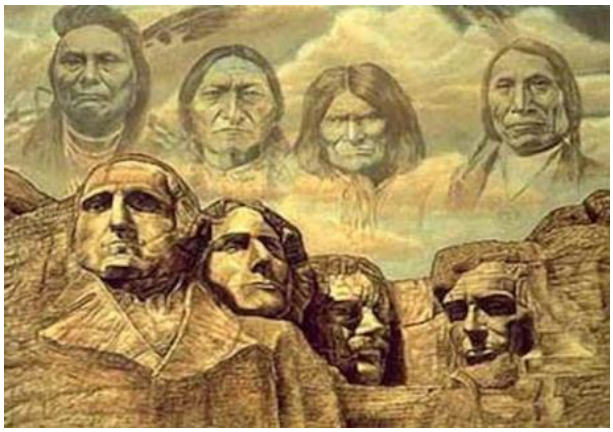
Anthony Faiola in Rome contributed to this report.

Direct Link: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/pope-to-declare-spanish-priest-a-saint-but-native-americans-beg-to-differ/2015/09/10/d585dc2c-51a4-11e5-9812-92d5948a40f8_story.html?tid=pm_local_pop_b

Land Claims: An Indigenous People’s History of the United States

By Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

Saturday, Sep 12, 2015, 8:48 am



On July 23, 1980, in United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Black Hills (Paha Sapa) had been taken illegally and offered $106 million dollars be paid in remuneration. The Sioux, maintaining that their land was not for sale, refused. Today, that settlement, still sitting untouched in an interest-bearing account, is worth over $1 billion dollars. (http://www.nativevillage.org)

With a large part of Indigenous nations’ territories and resources in what is now the United States taken through aggressive war, outright theft, and legislative appropriations, Native peoples have vast claims to reparations and restitution. Indigenous nations negotiated numerous treaties with the United States that included land transfers and monetary compensation, but the remaining Indigenous territories have steadily shrunk due to direct federal appropriation by various means as well as through government

failure to meet its obligation to protect Indigenous landholdings as required under treaties. The U.S. government has acknowledged some of these claims and has offered monetary compensation. However, since the upsurge of Indian rights movements in the 1960s, Indigenous nations have demanded restoration of treaty-guaranteed land rather than monetary compensation.

Native Americans, including those who are legal scholars, ordinarily do not use the term "reparations" in reference to their land claims and treaty rights. Rather, they demand restoration, restitution or repatriation of lands acquired by the United States outside valid treaties. These demands for return of lands and water and other resource rights illegally taken certainly could be termed "reparations," but they have no parallel in the monetary reparations owed, for example, to Japanese Americans for forced incarceration or to descendants of enslaved African Americans. No monetary amount can compensate for lands illegally seized, particularly those sacred lands necessary for Indigenous peoples to regain social coherence. One form of Native claim does seek monetary compensation and might provide a template for other classes. Of the hundreds of lawsuits for federal trust mismanagement that Indigenous groups have filed, most since the 1960s, the largest and best known is the *Cobell v. Salazar* class-action suit, initially filed in 1996 and settled in 2011. The individual Indigenous litigants, from many Native nations, claimed that the U.S. Department of the Interior, as trustee of Indigenous assets, had lost, squandered, stolen and otherwise wasted hundreds of millions of dollars dating back to the forced land allotment beginning in the late 1880s. By the end of 2009, it was clear that the case was headed for a decision favoring the Indigenous groups when the lead plaintiffs, representing nearly a half-million Indigenous individuals, accepted a $3.4-billion settlement proposed by the Obama administration. The amount of the settlement was greater than the half-billion dollars that the court would likely have awarded. However, what was sacrificed in the settlement was a detailed accounting of the federal government's misfeasance. As one reporter lamented: "The result will see some involved with the case, especially lawyers, become quite rich, while many Indians–the majority, in all likelihood–will receive about a third of what it takes to feed a family of four for just one year."

Another important form of reparations is the repatriation of remains of dead ancestors and burial items. After considerable struggle on the part of Indigenous religious practitioners, Congress enacted the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), which requires that museums return human remains and burial items to the appropriate Indigenous communities. It is fitting that Congress used the term "repatriation" in the act. Before NAGPRA, the federal government had used "repatriation" to describe the return of remains of prisoners of war to foreign nations. Native American nations are sovereign as well, and Congress correctly characterized the returns as repatriations.

Although compensation for federal trust mismanagement and repatriation of ancestral remains represent important victories, land claims and treaty rights are most central to Indigenous peoples' fight for reparations in the United States. The case of the great Sioux Nation exemplifies the persistence among Indigenous nations and Communities to protect

their sovereignty and cultures. The Sioux have never accepted the validity of the U.S. confiscation of Paha Sapa, the Black Hills. Mount Rushmore is controversial among Native Americans because it is located in the Black Hills. Members of the American Indian Movement led occupations of the monument beginning in 1971. Return of the Black Hills was the major Sioux demand in the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee. Due to a decade of intense protests and occupations by the Sioux, on July 23, 1980, in *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Black Hills had been taken illegally and that remuneration equal to the initial offering price plus interest—nearly $106 million—be paid. The Sioux refused the award and continued to demand return of the Black Hills. The money remained in an interest-bearing account, which by 2010, amounted to more than $757 million. The Sioux believe that accepting the money would validate the U.S. theft of their most sacred land. The Sioux Nation's determination to repatriate the Black Hills attracted renewed media attention in 2011. A segment of the PBS *NewsHour* titled "For Great Sioux Nation, Black Hills Can't Be Bought for $1.3 Billion" aired on Aug. 24, 2011. The reporter described a Sioux reservation as one of the most difficult places in which to live in the United States:

Few people in the Western Hemisphere have shorter life expectancies. Males, on average, live to just 48 years old, females to 52. Almost half of all people above the age of 40 have diabetes. And the economic realities are even worse. Unemployment rates are consistently above 80 percent. In Shannon County, inside the Pine Ridge Reservation, half the children live in poverty, and the average income is $8,000 a year. But there are funds available, a federal pot now worth more than a billion dollars. That sits here in the U.S. Treasury Department waiting to be collected by nine Sioux tribes. The money stems from a 1980 Supreme Court ruling that set aside $105 million to compensate the Sioux for the taking of the Black Hills in 1877, an isolated mountain range rich in minerals that stretched from South Dakota to Wyoming. The only problem: The Sioux never wanted the money because the land was never for sale.

That one of the most impoverished communities in the Americas would refuse a billion dollars demonstrates the relevance and significance of the land to the Sioux, not as an economic resource but as a relationship between people and place, a profound feature of the resilience of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

Excerpted from An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States *by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (Beacon Press, 2015). Reprinted with permission from Beacon Press.*

On Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, California, artists Aaron Huey and Shepherd Farley designed a mural to draw attention to ongoing violations of the Fort Laramie treaties—agreements between the U.S. government and Lakota people signed in 1851 and 1868. (Photo: Eric Becker / obeygiant.com)

Direct Link: http://inthesetimes.com/rural-america/entry/18399/land-claims-an-indigenous-peoples-history-of-the-united-states

The Day White Innocence Died: An Indigenous Take on #September11

Gyasi Ross
9/10/15

I remember the day, 9/11/2001, like it was yesterday.

I was a student in New York City. I'd been living there for a while at that time—I was still adjusting to being in the big city. I was a Native kid, a rez boy who grew up as a hip-hop head, and so I was living out my childhood fantasy of living in the birthplace of hip-hop *while* going to school and trying to pay my monthly rent.

Not easy.

I had class at nine o'clock that morning on September 11. I had a formula—it took me eight minutes to get dressed, wrap my hair in a t-shirt (on fleek!) and get to class. That meant that I could sleep until 8:52 in the morning. I always listened to the radio when I slept, so my dreams were often influenced by whatever I heard on the radio. I've done that since I was a little kid—I remember having nightmares about playing basketball with the "Thriller" version of Michael Jackson when I was little guy and I tumbled many, many times with Boy George as well!

But I digress.

On this particular morning—September 11—I remember hitting "snooze" in the morning time and going back to sleep. When I passed back out, I remember dreaming about a plane, a small crop duster in my dream, hitting a small building and falling to the ground. When I woke up, I hurried through my five-minute "get ready" routine—splash water in my face, brush my teeth, wrap my hair in a t-shirt and throw on the cleanest clothes in my room. Out of my apartment as quickly as I could!

At that time, my apartment was ONE block away from my school so I could make it in literally no time. When I rounded the corner from my block to the school, there were hundreds of people just *standing* outside on the corner and in the street. Now granted, this is New York City, White Harlem, so hundreds of people on a random street is not necessarily earth-shattering news. Yet, this was different—people were crying in the street, people looked confused in the street, and most important, these folks were right in front of my school, which was not really a sexy or fun street to hang out on.

Plus, it was 9 in the morning—I made it just in time for class. There were *never* hundreds of people there at 9 in the morning when class just started.

I saw my dear friend Vanessa and ran over to her. At that time, there were virtually no Natives at my school so Vanessa and I hung very, very close together and supported each other protectively. When I saw Vanessa, she was crying, so I asked her what was wrong.

"You haven't heard?" she asked me as if I was the most oblivious person in the world, which apparently I was.

"Heard what?" I asked her, confirming my ignorance and obliviousness.

Vanessa answered incredulously, "Somebody flew a plane into the World Trade Center. There was also one that went down at the Pentagon. I don't know if anything else happened down in Virginia…"

At that point, I knew why Vanessa was crying so passionately; her brother was stationed in Virginia. The scale of the destruction and tragedy still hadn't dawned on me—I just wanted to find out if her brother was okay. At that moment I also understood why I had the weird dream about the crop duster running into a building—I heard that news on the radio right before I woke up and it crept into my subconscious. Unfortunately, we couldn't call to find out if her brother was okay; all the phone lines were compromised, even landlines. That remained the case for almost a week. I later learned that my mom thought I was dead because she had never been to New York—how would she know that I was on the complete opposite side of Manhattan?

I thought I was dead too. When I learned of the destruction and evil behind the plane crashes, I figured that somebody was coming back to finish us off. There were bomb threats so everybody returned to their apartments and were no longer in the streets. I'm a country boy, a rez boy—this stuff was making no sense to me. I wanted to be home, on the rez, where people cry together and laugh together, where we mourn together, feel fear

together and face death together. I remember when the smell crept uptown and I could smell the fire and destruction and it forced me to close my apartment window despite the late summer heat. I wished I could share that claustrophobia with someone.

But this was the city, not my homelands, where everyone knows each other. Instead, this was a place with millions and millions of people within *extremely* close quarters and nobody knows each other.

It was weird. Not scary—I was cool dying, if that's what was gonna happen. I was just sad that I couldn't get my mom and my little brother on the phone to tell them that I loved them first.

Two women hold each other in shock and grief on Sep. 11, 2001 after planes crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City

Obviously I didn't die. Obviously a lot of information came out later that showed the enormity of the day that I didn't understand initially. Obviously it was much, much bigger than my little take on the day. Turns out that September 11th is probably the most important date in recent history—that date became the excuse for a whole new branch of government, a racist war against a nation that had nothing to do with that date, a racist war against an *idea*, terrorism, that is impossible to win. Because of that date, we're *still* spending hundreds of millions of dollars *a day* on a war that had nothing to do with September 11th that could be instead dedicated to education, health care, social security, veterans' benefits or any number of more worthwhile things.

It *was* undoubtedly a tragedy. But September 11th wasn't a surprise, at least not for Native people and many people of color. No, Native people were *already* well aware of how destructive and evil people could be. How did we know? AMERICA TAUGHT US THAT; really, September 11th was only a surprise for white people and for those who didn't realize that America had already perpetrated many September 11ths of its own. Native people knew that. We knew that America had a whole bunch of blood on its hands and that there was *always* a harvest season, always a reckoning. Sir Isaac Newton gave that harvest a name in his Third Law of Motion, that every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

Oh yeah, that means that there will be *more* September 11ths as well—it's inevitable *unless* America works to acknowledge and reconcile with its many victims of domestic terrorism against its own people. We see that energy right now—the current distrust of the federal government, the distrust of law enforcement and peoples' movements *of all colors* that don't believe in the legitimacy of the "powers that be," like Idle No More, the Occupy Movement, Black Lives Matter and the Tea Party. Obviously the viewpoints of those various movements are vastly different, but the energy is largely the same.

"We don't believe you. This Nation is build upon raw power and deceit and *not* freedom, equality or opportunity."

There will be more September 11ths unless we change, folks. God forbid, but unless we do something it *will* happen. There will be rectification for the Marias Massacre, for the Sand Creek Massacre, for Wounded Knee, for North Tulsa/Black Wall Street, the Mankato mass hanging, the Red Summer of 1919, Joe Coe, Emmett Till, internment camps of Japanese, Chinese Exclusion Act, slavery, Jim Crow, genocide, forced tubal ligation of Native women, Tuskegee experiments, etc., etc., etc.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. In the words of Ron Burgundy, "It's science." So, how do we stop this horrible cycle? Acknowledgment. Conversation. *Painful* conversation. Hell, restitution, reparations. Not punitive—just what the US owes. To wit, honor treaties with Native people and recognize aboriginal title, whether that be via monetary compensation (a disgusting compromise for many Native people, yet one that acknowledges practical realities) or specific performance. Monetary compensation for black folks for 40 acres and a mule—what is that in today's dollars?

Formally apologize. Acknowledge. Treat us as human beings—the inhumane way that many white folks on this continent treated people of color for 400 years *still* influences the way they perceive us today, *hence* the incredibly disproportionate amount of deaths for Native and Black people at the hands of law enforcement.

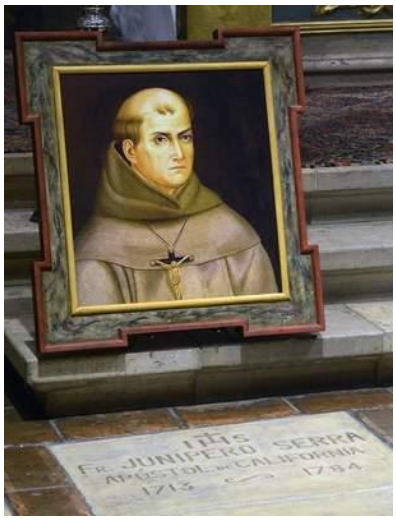
Not civil rights-- human rights—treat us like human beings.

Otherwise there *will* be more September 11ths. It's physics. Natural law. We're stuck with each other—none of us are going anyplace. But acknowledgment, reconciliation and restitution of America's past crimes will move help us move to a new age, where we can get past these historical demons and actually start living in the 21st Century.

God bless the families of all who were harmed by September 11th. God also bless the families devastated by all instances of terrorism, including those perpetrated by the United States.

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/09/10/thing-about-skins-day-white-innocence-died-indigenous-take-september11-161710

California Native American tribes still trying to prevent Serra canonization



A painting of Father Junipero Serra is seen above his grave inside the basilica at the Carmel Mission in Carmel. (David Royal - Monterey Herald)

By Claudia Meléndez Salinas, Monterey Herald

Posted: 09/11/15, 7:16 PM PDT | Updated: 2 days ago

MONTEREY >> California Native American tribes are still trying to prevent the canonization of Junípero Serra, the prelate that stands as a symbol of all the injustices they say were committed against them through the mission system.

Most recently, the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of Ohlone/Costanoan Indians started an online petition to Gov. Jerry Brown urging him to oppose converting Serra into a saint and comparing him to the Confederate flag in its representation of oppression.

"Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina called on the state legislature to remove the Confederate flag from the state capitol grounds, recognizing that the flag represented 'a brutally oppressive state,' " the online petition reads. "The State of California likewise needs to recognize that the mission system that Junípero Serra established in California was oppressive and brutal for the Indians who were involuntarily confined in these compounds."

Brown has already demonstrated his support for Serra, as he said he would oppose efforts to remove Serra's statue from the National Statuary Hall Collection in Congress and replace it with astronaut Sally Ride.

But Native American groups will continue with their efforts, said Louise Miranda Ramirez, tribal chairwoman of the Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation.

“We’ve got to try what we can,” she said. “We have the petition to the governor as well as the petition given to the pope. We have almost 10,000 signatures on that.”

There are three petitions circulating now opposing Serra’s sainthood that have gathered nearly 20,000 signatures.

However, Serra’s canonization is a fait accompli. Pope Francis is scheduled to canonize the Spanish friar on Sept. 23 at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The Carmel Mission will set up a large screen for people who want to see the live transmission there.

“We already know we want to go (to the Carmel Mission) and pray,” Ramirez said. “A group who’s visiting all the missions is expected to be there.”

Serra, referred to as the father of the California mission system, founded the first nine of the 21 missions in California. He is buried at the Carmel Mission.

Revered by Catholics, Serra’s role in the establishment of the missions has long been a sore spot for Native Americans, who blame the institution for the “genocide” of their ancestors.

The law at the time determined that all baptized Indians were subject to the authority of the mission system, which was the economic backbone of the Spanish empire in Alta California. They could be whipped, shackled or imprisoned if they rebelled, and were hunted down if they ran away from mission grounds.

Ramirez would like to see Pope Francis apologize where Serra’s legacy remains.

“How come he doesn’t come here, where it happened, in the California missions?” Ramirez said. “Come here to talk to us, they’re not listening to us … When we look at Serra, we remember stories from Monterey, that our family members were killed and hung on the street. When they’re honoring Serra, we remember what happened in the mission.”

Direct Link: http://www.montereyherald.com/social-affairs/20150911/california-native-american-tribes-still-trying-to-prevent-serra-canonization

Toronto Film Review: ‘Mekko’

Courtesy of TIFF
September 11, 2015 | 04:56PM PT

Dennis Harvey, Film Critic

Something of a next-generation take on the themes in recently rediscovered indie classics "The Exiles" (1961) and "On the Bowery" (1956), Sterlin Harjo's third narrative feature updates their semi-documentary views of Native American and Skid Row urban culture to latter-day Oklahoma, adding a supernaturally tinged suspense element. This low-key, impressionistic, loosely plotted tale is unlikely to expand much upon the commercial outreach achieved by his similarly angled "Four Sheets to the Wind" and "Barking Water." Bur for the patient, "Mekko" offers another flavorful if largely downbeat snapshot of Native American life, one that should find favor with festival programmers and niche buyers.

When we first meet fiftysomething Mekko (rodeo pro turned film stuntman Rod Rondeaux), he's just getting released after 19 years in prison for killing his much-liked artist cousin in a mutually drunken brawl. He's done the punitive hard time both physically and spiritually. But the relative he visits for a hopeful reconciliation makes it clear that surviving Creek-tribe family members haven't and will never forgive him. That leaves him homeless on the streets of Tulsa, where he soon encounters rambunctiously good-natured old pal Bunny (Wotko Long), and falls in with the vagrant population of street chiefs likewise scraping by sans safety net.

Casting himself as that community's protector but in fact more of a predator is the sinister, younger Bill (Zahn McClarnon). He finds easy marks among their ranks for his proffered cash, drink and drugs, then enjoys claiming brutal (sometimes fatal) payback when they can't make good on their "debts." Credited as a seer since a childhood illness due to the water pollution that ended up vacating his lead-mining town, Mekko senses Bill may really be a sort of shape-shifting demon — one he needs to vanquish in order to regain his own long-lost essential tribal spirit.

Not a lot happens here amid the vignettes of down-and-out life. Some street folk are found murdered, likely victims of Bill's vindictiveness. Mekko gains a watchful ally in diner waitress Tafv (Sarah Podemski); he tries to provide the same support to Allan (Tre

Harjo), a Native youth who's dropped out of college and might easily drop farther into a substance-abusing spiral.

While Mekko himself tries to stay clean, his Tulsa liberty has its own boozy, untethered quality. Both gentle and tough in Rondeaux's soulful performance, this man of few words wanders on the brink of a precipice whose yawning depths are implied in the film's design textures. As grittily authentic as the street life here feels, Harjo also captures a near-hallucinogenic mood, particularly in the soundtrack's complex mix of music and ambient noise.

Direct Link: http://variety.com/2015/film/reviews/mekko-review-toronto-film-festival-1201591452/

Native protesters shine light on complicated history

Groups protest celebration of St. Augustine's 450th birthday

Author: Ryan Benk, WJCT News
Published On: Sep 12 2015 07:00:00 AM EDT

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. -

Thousands of tourists flocked to St. Augustine this week to celebrate the founding of America's oldest city. But one group at the ceremonies was calling for an end to the revelry. Indigenous protesters say the anniversary is a painful memory that's too often forgotten by the masses.

Against a backdrop of canon fire, Bobby C. Billie's walking stick clicked against the historic stones of the Castillo de San Marcos as he approached the entrance Sunday morning. He was having a conversation with Ceco Osceola in their native tongue.

The two Native American activists were among about 30 protesters in St. Augustine that morning.

“We’re asking the government to tear down the fort and then invite indigenous people to build and structure what was there before. And then we can celebrate," Billie said. "Otherwise there’s no celebration.”

They unfurled a flag of the Original Miccosukee Simanolee Nation, a federally unrecognized tribe for which Billie serves as spiritual leader.

Billie said the arrival of St. Augustine founder Pedro Menendez marked the death of his people’s way of life.

Ceco Osceola takes that sentiment a step further.

“I mean, if somebody comes around and says, ‘Hey, why don’t we make a party out of the whole year for Hitler?’ Are they going to jump in the boat? How about Bin Laden?” he said.

Osceola said the city’s celebration is at best tone-deaf, if not a complete whitewash of native history.

But St. Augustine Mayor Nancy Shaver disagrees.

She said the city isn't celebrating Menendez per se, rather the event is meant to celebrate the area’s rich history of being a cultural melting pot.

“This is not telling St. Augustine’s entire story," Shaver said. "This is the 450th, the founding of truly a European settlement. Founding European settlements in this country was never pretty.”

Director of the commemoration, Dana Ste. Claire, said native history is featured prominently at the city’s visitor center.

“If you go to the Tapestry exhibition, the 4,000-square-foot signature exhibition for the 450th at the visitor information center, Native American culture is a huge component of the story,” he said.

Flagler College historian and professor of religion Timothy Johnson said it’s uncomfortable for city officials to deal with a checkered past, and there’s an overemphasis on myth and legend.

He said the true history of St. Augustine lies somewhere between the city’s sanitized version and the protesters’ purely negative one.

“There are any number of cases, certainly, where Native Americans were treated horribly, but to say that was the absolute and universal policy within the first Spanish period is really quite contrary to the actual historical facts,” Johnson said.

Direct Link: http://www.news4jax.com/news/native-protesters-shine-light-on-complicated-history/35228710

Out with 'Redskins' — and everything else!

A Redskins helmet on the sideline during a preseason game against the Cleveland Browns last month. (David Richard/Associated Press)

By George F. Will Opinion writer September 4

Autumn, season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, also is the time for The Post and other sensitivity auditors to get back on — if they will pardon the expression — the warpath against the name of the Washington Redskins. The niceness police at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office have won court approval of their decision that the team's name "may disparage" Native Americans. We have a new national passion for moral and historical hygiene, a determination to scrub away remembrances of unpleasant things, such as the name Oklahoma, which is a compound of two Choctaw words meaning "red" and "people."

Connecticut's state Democratic Party has leapt into the vanguard of this movement, vowing to sin no more: Never again will it have a Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner. Connecticut Democrats shall still dine to celebrate their party's pedigree but shall not sully the occasions by mentioning the names of two slave owners. Because Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners have long been liturgical events for Democrats nationwide, now begins an entertaining scramble by states' parties — Georgia's, Missouri's, Iowa's, New

Hampshire's, and Maine's already have taken penitential actions — to escape guilt by association with the third and seventh presidents.

George F. Will writes a twice-weekly column on politics and domestic and foreign affairs. He began his column with The Post in 1974, and he received the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1977. He is also a contributor to FOX News' daytime and primetime programming.

The Post should join this campaign for sanitized names, thus purging the present of disquieting references to the past. The newspaper bears the name of the nation's capital, which is named for a slave owner who also was — trigger warning — a tobacco farmer. Washington, D.C., needs a new name. Perhaps Eleanor Roosevelt, D.C. She had nothing to do with her husband's World War II internment of 117,000 persons of Japanese descent, two-thirds of whom were native-born American citizens.

Hundreds of towns, counties, parks, schools, etc., are named for Washington. The name of Washington and Lee University is no mere micro-aggression, it is compounded hate speech: Robert E. Lee probably *saluted* the Confederate flag. Speaking of which: During the Senate debate on the 1964 Civil Rights Act, when Virginia's Willis Robertson waved a small Confederate flag on the Senate floor, Minnesota's Hubert Humphrey, liberal hero and architect of the legislation, called this flag a symbol of "bravery and courage and conviction." So, the University of Minnesota should seek a less tainted name for its Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Princeton University can make amends for its Woodrow Wilson School, named after the native Virginian who aggressively resegregated the federal workforce.

Jacksonville, Florida — a state where Andrew Jackson honed his skill at tormenting Native Americans — Jefferson City, Missouri, Madison, Wisconsin, and other places must be renamed for people more saintly. And speaking of saints:

Even secularists have feelings. And the Supreme Court says the First Amendment's proscription of the "establishment of religion" forbids nondenominational prayers at high school graduations. What, then, of the names of St. Louis, San Diego, San Antonio and numerous other places named for religious figures. Including San Francisco, the Vatican, so to speak, of American liberalism. Let the renaming begin, perhaps for liberal saints: Gore City, Sharpton City. Tony Bennett can sing, "I left my heart in Pelosi City."

Conservatives do not have feelings, but they are truculent, so perhaps a better idea comes from Joseph Knippenberg, who is an American rarity — a professor with good sense and a sense of humor. He suggests that, in order to spare everyone discomfort, cities, buildings and other things should be given names that are inoffensive because they have no meaning whatsoever. Give things perfectly vacuous names like those given to car models — Acura, Elantra and Sentra.

Unfortunately, Knippenberg teaches at Atlanta's Oglethorpe University, which is named for James Oglethorpe, who founded the colony that became the slave state of Georgia. So, let us move on.

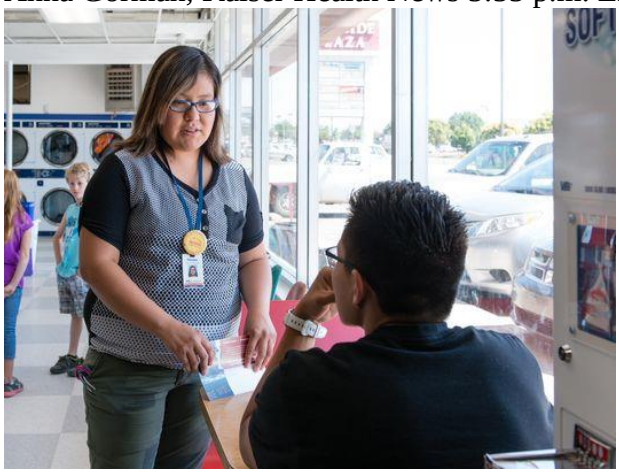
To Massachusetts and Minnesota, which should furl their flags. Massachusetts' flag shows a Native American holding a bow and arrow, a weapon that reinforces a hurtful stereotype of Native Americans as less than perfectly peaceful. A gimlet-eyed professor in Wisconsin has noticed that Minnesota's flag includes the state seal, which depicts two figures, a pioneer tilling a field, and a Native American riding away — and carrying a spear. A weapon. Yikes. The farmer is white and industrious; the Native America is nomadic. So, Minnesota's seal communicates a subliminal slander, a coded message of white superiority. Who knew that Minnesotans, who have voted Democratic in 10 consecutive presidential elections since 1972, are so insensitive?

This is liberalism's dilemma: There are so many things to be offended by, and so little time to agonize about each.

Direct Link: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/cleaning-up-history-one-name-at-a-time/2015/09/04/21ead5d4-525b-11e5-8c19-0b6825aa4a3a_story.html

Native Americans take advantage of Obamacare

Anna Gorman, Kaiser Health News 5:55 p.m. EDT September 12, 2015



ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — As a member of the Navajo tribe, Rochelle Jake has received free care through the Indian Health Service (IHS) her entire life. The clinics took care of her asthma, allergies and eczema – chronic problems, nothing urgent.

Recently, though, she felt sharp pains in her side. Her doctor recommended an MRI and other tests she couldn't get through IHS. To pay for it, he urged her to sign up for private insurance under the Affordable Care Act.

“I couldn’t wrap my head around it,” said Jake, 45, sitting on the porch swing of her home in Albuquerque. She didn’t think Obamacare applied to her.

“I thought [IHS] should be responsible for my health care because I am Native American.”

Tribes, health care advocates and government officials across the nation are trying to enroll as many Native Americans as possible in Obamacare, saying it offers new choices to patients and financial relief for struggling Indian hospitals and clinics.

Native Americans can get an exemption from the requirement that everybody have health insurance. But under the health law, many can get coverage under Medicaid, which serves low-income Americans or buy subsidized plans through insurance exchanges. That allows them to receive treatment from private doctors and hospitals rather than rely solely on government and tribal facilities.

And the coverage allows Indian health facilities – which tribal leaders say are chronically underfunded -- to offer new services and bill insurers for care they already provide.

Advocates also see the health law as a chance to reduce the health disparities that have long afflicted Native Americans, including rates of diabetes that are three times higher than the U.S. population.

“The Affordable Care Act is starting to fill the gap between need and current resources,” said Doneg McDonough, a consultant to tribes on implementation of the health law. “And it is a huge gap that has to be filled in.”

The Indian Health Service provides care to about 2.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in 35 states. But the federal agency, with a fixed budget of $4.6 billion, can’t afford comprehensive services at all its far-flung facilities.

“I don’t know if you guys have all heard of this saying, ‘Don’t get sick after June because IHS runs out of funding in June,’” enrollment worker Shaina Ramone recently told a crowd at a Navajo business near Farmington, N.M. “So don’t get sick in July or August.”

Margaret Thompson, 59, has arthritis and diabetes. Thompson signed up for a private plan through the New Mexico exchange for herself and her husband. The tax credits cover the entire monthly premium of $811. (Photo: Heidi de Marco, Kaiser Health News)

Enrollment workers have an uphill battle, however, because many Native Americans are unfamiliar with insurance or mistrust the government.

"We are just now starting to scratch the surface," said Sonny Weahkee, outreach coordinator for Native American Professional Parent Resources, which has a contract with New Mexico to do outreach and enrollment among Native communities. "Insurance has always been available to other people, but it is brand new for us."

Weahkee's job is to travel across the state to talk to Native Americans about Obamacare. His organization persuaded Jake to enroll in a plan through New Mexico's exchange that costs about $37 a month. She can finally schedule an MRI.

Native Americans in federally recognized tribes can sign up year-round. Weahkee, who is part Navajo and part Pueblo, meets one on one with potential enrollees, answering questions and promoting the benefits of insurance.

At a traditional tribal feast in Santo Domingo, a small pueblo about 45 minutes from Albuquerque, he stands in front of a shaded table, handing out brochures and fans with the logo of the New Mexico exchange.

The next day, he travels to the hilltop Navajo reservation in Shiprock, where he talks to customers at busy grocery store and a small restaurant where a handwritten menu features mutton stew, Navajo burger and fry bread.

Helping Hospitals, Too

Doctor Angelina Shigeura checks a patient's record at the Zuni Comprehensive Community Health Center. (Photo: Heidi de Marco, Kaiser Health News)

No reliable estimates exist on the total number of Native Americans who have enrolled in Obamacare. But tribal officials and experts around the country said Indian health facilities and contractors are already reaping the benefits. In fiscal year 2014, the Indian Health Service collected $49 million more in revenue because of patients newly insured through the ACA, according to the agency.

In New Mexico, Leonard Thomas, acting IHS director for the Albuquerque region, says the money is helping modernize aging facilities and add medical staff. Thomas says the IHS can now pay for more services, such as diagnostic tests from outside facilities.

Brian Garretson, director of patient financial services for the San Juan Regional Medical Center, a nonprofit community hospital in Farmington, is more than willing to lend space to outreach workers to sign up new enrollees. His hospital contracts with IHS to provide care to Native Americans. “There are times when we get to the end of their fiscal year and they have already gone through all their money so we aren’t going to get paid,” he said.

At the Zuni Comprehensive Health Center on a reservation west of Albuquerque, CEO Jean Othole said she’s excited about the future. With added revenue, she plans to expand the number of exam rooms throughout the hospital.

Still, Othole said, the hospital struggles to recruit doctors, and patients have to leave for surgeries and most emergency and specialty care.

Much More To Do

Fedelia Perez, a 29-year old Navajo woman from Pinehill, New Mexico, is recovering after giving birth to her baby, Marcos Perez, at the Zuni Comprehensive Community Health Center on Thursday, August 6, 2015. The hospital is not equipped to perform C-sections, so patients need to leave for surgeries and most emergency and specialty care. (Photo: Heidi de Marco, Kaiser Health News)

The health law so far is having an uneven impact on Native Americans. Not all states chose to expand Medicaid. And because of the way the law defines Native American, only certain tribal members are entitled to special benefits such as a restriction on co-pays and deductibles.

Some people are more receptive to health insurance than others. Galen Martinez, a teacher who lives on the Acoma pueblo west of Albuquerque, hasn't signed up. As he cooked chicken wings at a tribal ceremony in Gallup, Martinez said the U.S. government should provide comprehensive health care to Native Americans for free, as promised. Insurance doesn't solve the problem – even if you have it, getting from remote reservations to cities for care is burdensome, he said.

Weahkee and his team say that is part of their challenge. Along with signing Native Americans up for insurance, they also teach them how to use it.

They recently helped enroll 59-year-old Margaret Thompson in an exchange plan. It was the first time the Navajo woman had been insured. Sitting at an outreach office in Farmington, Thompson said now she's nervous about seeking out private doctors to treat her arthritis and diabetes. She's used to the Indian Health Service.

"I don't know where to begin," she said.

Kaiser Health News is an editorially independent program of the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Direct Link: http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/09/12/kaiser-native-americans-obamacare/72015904/

Native Student and Family Disappointed After Meeting With University President Re Native Genocide

Vincent Schilling
9/12/15

One week after 19-year-old Native American student Chiitaanibah Johnson of California State University, Sacramento says she was disenrolled from her U.S. History class for disagreeing with her professor over the existence of Native American genocide, Johnson and her family met with Sacramento State President Robert S. Nelsen to discuss the matter. Though Johnson and her family say the meeting was cordial and sincere, they feel disappointed and say they fear neither the school nor the president will be taking any action that will satisfactorily address their concerns.

President Nelsen agreed to meet on Thursday with Johnson as well as her mother, Martina Johnson, father Kurt Johnson and Cindy La Marr (Pit River and Paiute), Executive Director of Capitol Area Indian Resources, Inc. in Sacramento, an organization that advocates for the academic and cultural rights of American Indian students. Nelsen told the family and the University has told ICTMN in an email that the President will also be meeting with Professor Maury Wiseman, the professor involved in the matter, at a later time.

Johnson says she was comforted by the meeting's informality but fears a viable solution may never happen. "The president was respectful, open and I didn't expect it to be just him," she said. "I thought someone would be recording it or there would possibly be a lawyer present, but there wasn't.

"But when we pressed for a solution," says Johnson, "the president told me that his hands were basically tied. I thought at least the professor's class might be monitored or evaluated on some level. But the professor is still teaching and going on with his class."

Cindy La Marr, who has worked with public schools and universities for many years for the benefit of Indian country, says she was not as impressed by Nelsen's cordial demeanor. She told ICTMN that some of Nelsen's proposed solutions were not sufficient. La Marr said Nelsen told them about a proposed University 'California Native American Day,' on September 25th that would hold seminars on Native Americans. "I asked if the instructor would be required to attend this, and he said, 'No.'"

La Marr says that when she and the family asked if there was going to be any disciplinary action against the professor, President Nelsen said Professor Wiseman was protected by his faculty's labor union. "I asked if there was a vetting process for hiring part-time adjunct faculty and he said he did not know," Lamar told ICTMN. "He said he was new and there were binders full of policies that protected faculty that he had not reviewed. I

asked if part-time adjunct instructors were protected by faculty labor unions. He said, 'Yes.'"

La Marr says after the Johnson family's repeated attempts to ask if the professor would be disciplined were deflected, they decided to leave. "I continually asked, 'What is your plan?'" Martina Johnson said. "The President just told us, 'It is out of my hands.'"

In addition to speaking to ICTMN, student Chiitaanibah Johnson also issued a written statement addressing her thoughts on the meeting.

The President was fair, open and welcoming in hearing my concerns. I appreciated his candor regarding the bureaucratic and regulatory restrictions his office is subject to with regards to the limited actions he is allowed to take with regards to the issues at hand.

However, I am particularly concerned that while CSU-Sacramento officials are working to transfer me into another course, Professor Wiseman, under protection of the faculty teacher's union and legal team, is still teaching under no observation or supervision while under investigation and that curriculum changes to actually address GENOCIDE are even less likely.

Having met with the CSU-Sacramento President, a fair and reasonable resolution to these issues appears unlikely within the current bureaucratic bounds of the university.

There are three very important points we want to make very clear:

- *Genocide is and always has been wrong.*
- *Teaching otherwise is wrong.*
- *Instructors demonstrating such lack of academic rigor and acting in a manner both aggressive and intimidating manner of stifling student questioning should be held accountable in a manner both fair and timely.*

Chiitaanibah Johnson's father Kurt Johnson added to his daughter's remarks and told ICTMN, "The professor's statements were a product of a direct lack of academic rigor. Academic freedom does not preclude academic responsibility."

ICTMN has reached out to Sacramento State regarding the meeting. University spokesperson Elisa Smith replied in an email with the following statement:

President Nelsen had an extensive, fact-gathering meeting with Ms. Johnson and her family as he attempts to achieve a positive resolution in this matter. He also is meeting with Prof. Wiseman.

As the fact-finding continues, and because this is an ongoing personnel matter, we cannot comment further at this time.

In the meantime, President Nelsen's message to the campus earlier this week speaks for itself:

We at the University believe in academic freedom, and we also believe in civility and rigorous academic research. Our standards must be high, and we must follow the processes that we have put in place to ensure that the rights of students and faculty are protected.

Johnson says when she first returned to the school after the incident, she felt as if people were looking her way but not overtly staring or being intrusive. Though she says she is disappointed in the outcome thus far, she is encouraged by the outpouring of support from Indian country.

"It is what it is. I had no idea what to expect based on what happened but I told myself not to be not to set on the idea that the professor would be reprimanded," she says. "I thought they might make him apologize or something else. The president basically said his hands were tied and there was only so much he could do.

"I feel unresolved about the issue. But my mom says, 'There are Indian people all over the country that are supporting you because they know the truth and they know you stood up for them.'

"There is a conversation now," says Johnson. "And people are talking about whether genocide has happened. My father said something that really affected me. He said, 'Even if nothing else happens, the circulation of this story and the effects on conversations across the country are more than my own grandfather could have done.' If I had done something like this back then, it could have gotten me killed. But here I am.

"I didn't realize how good having the blessing of so many Indian people would feel. I've only known the natives of the outer rings of my family or in college, but I've never felt so connected to Indian country."

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/09/12/native-student-and-family-disappointed-after-meeting-university-president-re-native

Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Who's Afraid of Human Rights?

ICTMN Staff

9/13/15

The following is a joint statement in support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Earlier this summer, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on the federal, provincial and territorial governments to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the central framework for Canada to at long last address the racism and blatant disregard for the lives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families exemplified by the residential school policy.

For organizations and individuals who have been deeply involved with the Declaration, the recommendation comes as no surprise.

Adopted by the UN General Assembly eight years ago on September 13, 2007, the Declaration sets out a global consensus on the minimum standards necessary to remedy policies, like Canada's residential schools experiment, that have uprooted, marginalized and impoverished Indigenous Peoples around the world. The Declaration affirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples to bring up their children in their language and traditions, to maintain their distinct relationships to their lands and territories, and make crucial decisions about their own lives and futures.

Given the depths of abuse documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the failure of governments in Canada to even acknowledge this intergenerational abuse until forced to do so by a class action suit, the value of such international human rights standards should be self-evident. As U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement released during the TRC's closing ceremonies, the U.N. Declaration is a roadmap for reconciliation.

Unfortunately, the federal government remains deeply opposed to the effective use and implementation of the U.N. Declaration. Even prior to the U.N. General Assembly's adoption of the Declaration in 2007, the government claimed over and over again that the rights protections set out in the Declaration somehow undermine the Canadian Constitution, derail reconciliation between Aboriginal Peoples and their neighbors, or otherwise tear the Canadian political fabric. The government has made these claims in the face of overwhelming consensus to the contrary by Canadian constitutional and international law experts, and principled, interpretive rulings of courts in Canada and other countries.

Canadians should be appalled that their government would make such claims about any human rights instrument, much less one that is specifically intended to address the needs and injustices of some of the most vulnerable sectors of society. The federal claims ignore the active role that Canadian government representatives played in the development and shaping of the Declaration, the careful balancing provisions included in the Declaration to explicitly state that the rights of all people must be respected, and the

fact that the Supreme Court of Canada relies on the same core principles for the balancing of rights.

It's also worth noting that the same government that claims to champion the Constitution and rule of law has routinely ignored the constitutionally-entrenched rights of Indigenous Peoples when issuing resource development permits, has fought to prevent application of the Canadian Human Rights Act to its contemporary policies on First Nations child and family protection, and has had to be repeatedly sued to implement even recently negotiated Treaties.

This failure to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples has been strongly and repeatedly criticized by international human rights mechanisms, including the U.N. Special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the U.N. Human Rights Committee, the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Ultimately, what lies behind the rhetoric about the Declaration is the federal government's resistance to sharing – constructively and creatively – the extraordinary power and control it continues to exercise over so many Indigenous Peoples in Canada, notwithstanding that it was the misuse of this power that impoverished and dispossessed Indigenous Peoples. That is the real heart of the matter.

Through extensive research and the testimony of more than 6,000 survivors of Indian Residential Schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission documented more than a century of horrific abuses. The Commission's summary report makes it clear that these abuses resulted both from government policies explicitly designed to eradicate Indigenous Peoples as distinct societies in Canada and, more broadly, from the assumption made by people in power that they knew what was best for Indigenous families, communities and Nations.

The U.N. Declaration was developed through a process of more than two decades of careful deliberation involving states and Indigenous Peoples from around the world. The Declaration refutes colonial domination of Indigenous Peoples in all its forms and sets out key standards and guarantees necessary to build a new relationship based on partnership and mutual respect.

The TRC asks us to embark on a new journey – one where human rights are upheld and the U.N. Declaration is the framework. This deserves the support of all Canadians.

The Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples consists of Indigenous Peoples organizations and human rights groups. The Coalition has worked collaboratively on the development, successful adoption and implementation of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the past 15 years.

Statement endorsed by:

Amnesty International Canada; Assembly of First Nations; Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers); First Nations Summit; Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee); Indigenous World Association; KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives; Native Women's Association of Canada; Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.; Québec Native Women/Femmes Autochtones du Québec; Union of BC Indian Chiefs

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/09/13/anniversary-un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-whos-afraid-human-rights-161731

Student Shares Insight About OU's Master of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law Program

ICTMN Staff
9/14/15

Lindsay Early was raised in Cache, Oklahoma as a proud member of the Comanche Nation. Growing up in a traditional Comanche family, she learned that tribal government is essential to maintaining sovereignty. She knew from a young age that she wanted to give back to her community, and attended the University of Oklahoma to earn a bachelor's degree in Sociology.

"I was interested in learning how an individual's race, religion, socioeconomic status, and education helped to shape his or her decisions," said Early, OU alumnus.

Early started her career at the Chickasaw Nation's Division of Commerce where she worked in Indian Gaming at the Riverwind Casino. She says this experience helped her realize how economic development ventures, such as gaming, benefit tribal citizens as well as non-members of tribes.

She proceeded in her career and decided to earn her Master of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law from the University of Oklahoma to be better informed about laws and regulations regarding Native Americans.

"I think it is vital for tribal leaders to be informed about legal issues that may affect their citizens, natural resources and economic development," Early said.

The Law Library at the University of Oklahoma. (Courtesy University of Oklahoma)

Located in the heart of the original Indian Territory, The University of Oklahoma College of Law offers an innovative Master of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law program. This graduate degree program is designed for non-lawyers who deal with contracts, negotiations and other issues that demand knowledge of Native American policy, regulation and business practices.

“In my career, it is vital to be informed with up-to-date regulations concerning Indian child welfare, natural resources, and economic development,” said Early. “I was chosen for my current position based on my education and experience in Indian country. I applied and was accepted into the Americans for Indian Opportunity's prestigious Ambassadors Program, which is an indigenous leadership program for up and coming Native leaders.”

The Master of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law program is an online program that offers a broad perspective on Native American law to non-lawyers or lawyers who wish to enhance their understanding of the field. The program is designed for working professionals who need to be able to complete their courses while working full-time.

“During the completion of my master’s degree, I was the project manager for Edith Kassanavoid Gordon Assisted Living, which is owned and operated by the Comanche Nation,” Early said. “I was in charge of ensuring the building met all required codes, budgeting, staffing, and writing the application for licensing by the Oklahoma State Department of Health. It is the first assisted living of its kind to offer Western medicine merged with indigenous values. I was able to balance my course work with my busy schedule very well. The Masters of Indigenous Peoples Law was instrumental in helping me to write the Oklahoma State Department of Health application as well as the Policy and Procedures for the center.”

When you’re considering a graduate program, it is important to choose an area of study that interests you, a school that is well known in your specific area of interest, a program

that will fit within your schedule, and a faculty that has experience both in the classroom and in the workforce. MLS in Indigenous Peoples Law classes are taught by individuals with decades of experience and national reputations as leaders in the field of Indigenous Peoples law.

“During the course of my studies, my professors taught me to view laws and regulations through a historical context,” said Early. “It is helpful to examine the political and social climate at the time different federal Indian policies were passed.”

Early has already received a lot of useful insights that she can use in her daily job, and she knows she will continue to use the valuable information she gained in the MLS in Indigenous Peoples Law program.

“I hope to continue writing legislation and policy that positively effects Indian country,” said Early. “The Masters of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples’ Law has helped me in my current position, and I am sure it will help me as I advance.”

While she received many benefits from the MLS in Indigenous Peoples Law program, Early admits that one of her favorite things was interacting with other tribal leaders and working to solve problems in Indian country.

“Sharing solutions from our own unique experiences has helped me immensely,” Early said. “I would highly recommend this degree to current and emerging tribal leaders, or anyone that works in Indian country.”

Visit OULawOnline.com for more information about the MLS in Indigenous Peoples Law program or to apply. OU Law is currently accepting applications for its January 2016 class.

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/09/14/student-shares-insight-about-ous-master-legal-studies-indigenous-peoples-law-program

OKC activists to request that city council replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day

Sarah Adams-Cornell belongs to the Choctaw Nation and is working to have Oklahoma City officially observe Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Andrew W. Griffin | September 14, 2015

OKLAHOMA CITY – Could Oklahoma City soon be celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day on the second Monday in October in place of Columbus Day?

Sarah Adams-Cornell is a member of the Choctaw Nation and the activist-in-residence in the Department of Social Justice at the University of Oklahoma. She and approximately 15 Native American activists plan to attend Tuesday morning's City Council meeting in the hope that they will consider doing the right thing.

"We've learned for so long that Columbus discovered America, but indigenous people were already here," she told *Red Dirt Report*, adding, "To form a holiday around someone who committed atrocities – murder, rape, mutilation – it's something that needs to be addressed."

Adams-Cornell, who helped in getting the offensive Capitol Hill High School Redskins mascot changed earlier this year, said changing this holiday has been a project she has wanted to pursue for a long time.

"Things have lined up to make it a good time to address this issue," she said.

Adams-Cornell has been working quickly to spread the word about the Indigenous Peoples' Day proposal, sharing the hashtag #ipdOKC on Twitter, Facebook and elsewhere.

Celebrating Columbus Day, Adams-Cornell said, is "a real slap in the face of indigenous people," no different, she said, than if there was a day celebrating Adolf Hitler.

In 2014, *Red Dirt Report* featured an editorial calling for Oklahoma City's City Council to no longer recognize Columbus Day and instead replace it with Indigenous Peoples' Day. It had been successfully changed in other cities, including Minneapolis and Seattle, and with Oklahoma City's historical ties to Native American life and culture it was seen as being a no-brainer.

"This is a good step in telling the truth about Columbus and his legacy and also honoring the first inhabitants of this land," Adams-Cornell said. "It is about addressing the atrocities against us and trying to right that."

Adams-Cornell admitted that it's never easy to talk about issues like the atrocities that happened against indigenous people, as happened under the watch of explorer and imperialist Christopher Columbus upon his arrival in the Americas in October 1492. But, she said, making sure children know the accurate history of our state and country is important.

"We are talking about genocide," she said. "It's never something people want to hear about but we will be addressing those issues."

In talking with Ward 2 Councilman Ed Shadid, he expressed to *Red Dirt Report* his interest in supporting a resolution to change the name and recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day. And while it may not be changed this year, it could be changed and observed in 2016 if the council supports it.

"We need to look at the man Columbus was," Shadid told *Red Dirt Report*. "Even for that time he was off the charts when it came to violence."

Adams-Cornell said she appreciates Shadid's support on this important issue.

Tuesday's City Council begins at 8:30 a.m. in the council chambers at City Hall, 200 N. Walker Avenue.

To learn more about Oklahoma City's Indigenous Peoples' Day efforts, go to www.facebook.com/ipdOKC.

Direct Link: http://www.reddirtreport.com/red-dirt-news/okc-activists-request-city-council-replace-columbus-day-indigenous-peoples-day

Denver District Attorney Clears Police in Shooting of Native American Man

Warning: Graphic video shows how the deadly encounter unfolded.

—By AJ Vicens

| Mon Sep. 14, 2015 7:17 PM EDT

Denver District Attorney Mitch Morrissey has declined to press criminal charges against a Denver police officer who shot and killed a Native American man in July. The man, Paul Castaway, holding a knife to his own throat and threatening to kill himself, was walking toward officers when Officer Michael Traudt fired three shots toward Castaway, two of which hit him in the midsection. Along with a nine-page report explaining his decision, Morrissey on Monday released surveillance footage of the shooting.

The shooting spurred protests in Denver this summer, as Castaways' family disputed the initial police account that claimed Castaway, 35, came "dangerously close" to officers with a knife. At the time, they said officers didn't have to shoot him, and he was clearly mentally ill and in need of help. People in Castaway's family said they'd seen the video shortly after the shooting, and said it showed him holding the knife to his throat—not pointing it in the direction of the police.

Lynn Eagle Feather, Castaway's mother, blasted Morrissey's decision. "I don't think it's right," she told *Mother Jones* on Monday. "Because the Denver Police have been getting away with killing so many young people. Yeah my son had a knife to his throat, but he was more of a threat to himself than he was to the police."

According to Morrissey's report, officers were deployed to Eagle Feather's apartment after she called and told the police that her son had arrived, "mentally ill and drunk." She said she had been watching her grandchildren, and that her son had poked her in the neck with a knife, so she took the kids to a building across the street for safety. When the police arrived, they talked to Eagle Feather there and then went back to her apartment to see if her son was still around. As they escorted the mother back to her home, the officers spotted Castaway, who began running.

The officers chased him to a nearby trailer park, where they cornered him between a fence and a minivan. Castaway turned around, with the knife to his own throat, while walking in the direction of the officers. The surveillance footage shows the officers backing up as Castaway walks toward them with the knife still to his throat. According to Traudt, Castaway "started to move the knife from his throat toward me, and he didn't stick it out, but he brought it down, and he was walking at me just aggressively and he wouldn't stop, and I didn't feel like I could back up anymore."

Castaway had his back to the surveillance camera that captured footage of the shooting, so it's impossible to tell whether the knife was actually coming away from his neck. The video also shows a lot of bystanders in the area, including several children.

"I called for help," Eagle Feather said. "I didn't call for a killing. And I can never get my son back."

Eagle Feather told *Mother Jones* that the police need more training on how to deal with the mentally ill. She said she's considering legal action against the Denver Police Department. The city of Denver has paid out more than $10 million in the last four years related to excessive police force, according to the *Colorado Independent*.

Morrissey said his decision was based on the law.

"In this case, Castaway's decision to turn, confront the officers and deliberately advance toward Officer Traudt, knife in hand, rather than complying with his orders, compelled Officer Traudt to shoot," Morissey said in the report. "The surveillance video clearly depicts Castaway moving quickly and purposefully toward Officer Traudt. Castaway's actions and the statements he made suggest he had decided to die and further decided that Officer Traudt would be the instrument of his demise."

This article has been revised.

Direct Link: http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/09/native-american-shot-denver-police-cleared-shooting

Forum highlights Native American roots in Tennessee

Albert Bender 12 a.m. CDT September 15, 2015

Indian history was recently made with the holding of an election forum in Murfreesboro on Aug. 8 for Muscogee Creek candidates running for the offices of principal chief and tribal council.

The forum was organized by the Tennessee Creek Association (TCA), which is composed of enrolled members of the Muscogee Creek Nation (MCN) residing in the state.

The election will be held Saturday.

The importance and significance of this MCN forum is that this is the first time in recent history there was a Creek forum in the state.

“We are sticking close to our tribe even though we live in another state. We need the state of Tennessee to realize what our tribe has done here,” said Melba Checote-Eads, MCN member and Tennessee resident.

Candidates present for the office of principal chief were James Floyd, Adam Jones, David Nichols and Thomas Yahola.

Council candidates attending the forum were Arlene Davis, Robert Hufft, Rufus Scott and Sharon Wyatt/ Rose.

The forum was entitled “Come Home to the Homeland.”

As many are not aware, the Muscogee Creek are among the ancient inhabitants of Tennessee.

In olden times the lands of the Muscogee people included parts of eastern Tennessee.

In fact, Chattanooga, for which the present city is named, is a Creek word said to mean “rock coming to a point.”

The title of the forum was a reminder of ancient origins. In fact, the Creeks seemed to have predated the Cherokees in parts of East Tennessee.

The forum also received an official welcome proclamation from Gov. Bill Haslam.

The TCA became officially chartered with the state of Tennessee in 2007 when Creek citizens organized to advocate for Native issues in the state.

This journalist was honored to be asked to be a timekeeper for the candidates who spoke.

I can only say that I was greatly impressed by all the candidates with their competence, knowledge, passion and articulation of the myriad of issues.

The concerns confronting the Muscogee Creek Nation include those of so many Native nations, such as the need for jobs, health care, education, housing and care of veterans, the disabled and the elderly.

In other words, the overall issue of a higher standard of living for all Creek citizens.

The forum also brought awareness to the public that MCN citizens, in significant numbers, are residents of Tennessee.

This brings to the fore issues of particular concern to the TCA.

These matters include (1) cultural preservation of ancient sites in the state, particularly the thousands of years-old mounds, (2) repatriation of 11,000 culturally affiliated Native remains and (3) documentation of the Northern Trail of Tears route that many Creeks with Cherokees took.

This also brings to mind that the Creek and Cherokee people have been closely connected for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

Of further importance was that the forum indicated that the MCN of Oklahoma recognizes the Muscogee Creek community of Tennessee.

It is also indicative of the return of Native people to the homelands after the genocidal 1830s removals.

Albert Bender is a Native American historian, author and community activist. Email him at albertbender07@yahoo.com.

Direct Link: http://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/09/14/forum-highlights-native-american-roots-tennessee/72265434/

Will new Australian PM address long-standing Aboriginal issues?

By Ripeka Timutimu 4:54pm, Tuesday 15 September 2015

Australia

New Liberal leader Malcolm Turnbull has been sworn as Prime Minister of Australia in a ceremony this afternoon at Australia's Government House.

Turnbull ousted Tony Abbott in a leadership challenge last night 54 votes to 44. But will Turnbull finally address the long-standing issues of aboriginal in Australia?

He's a keen supporter of gay rights, and some are hoping he will back indigenous people just as much.

Prime Minister John Key and Opposition leader Andrew Little were surprised by last night's ousting.

Key says, “I also sent a text to Tony Abbott. We have been close for a number of years. But as we know politics can be brutal.”

Little says, “Clearly there are some issues in Australia. There's something going on there, a more deep seated problem. Something in Canberra's water.”

Former Te Tai Tokerau MP Hone Harawira is glad to see the back of him.

Harawira criticised the closing of Aboriginal communities earlier this year.

Political commentator Areti Metuamate says the Aboriginal community there is unsure of Turnbull's position on indigenous issues.

Metuamate says, “It can't possibly get any worse for us than under Tony Abbott and budget cuts in the area of aboriginal affairs, and he spoke a lot of advancement of aboriginal affairs but didn't do a great deal.”

Harawira says, “He doesn't display any concern for the Aboriginal community's wishes. In my view, there isn't much difference between him and the guy who was kicked out. However time will tell.”

Metuamate says that even though they've found their voice of protest, they've yet to find a strong voice in the House.

No doubt the indigenous people there have dreams that the new Prime Minister will help them to a better future in the coming years.

Direct Link: http://www.maoritelevision.com/news/regional/will-new-australian-pm-address-long-standing-aboriginal-issues

A ‘Civil War’ Is Being Waged Against Indigenous Tribes in the Southern Philippines, Rights Groups Say

- Lisa Spear

Sept. 15, 2015

Mourners in Manila join a protest over Lumad killings on Sept. 11, 2015. Many indigenous peoples have been forced to flee their communities

Thousands have fled their homes, fearing abuse at the hands of shadowy paramilitary groups

Human-rights groups are accusing the Philippine military of harassing and killing members of indigenous farming communities, who are caught in the crossfire of a long-running communist insurgency on the archipelago's southernmost island, Mindanao.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), hundreds of Lumad, an umbrella term for multiple different indigenous communities, have taken shelter at an evacuation camp in Davao City — Mindanao's largest urban center — since May, driven off their ancestral lands by a military offensive against the left-wing New People's Army. Thousands more reportedly fled this month to Tandag City.

In the spring of this year, the Bangkok-based Catholic news agency UCA News reported that three members of the B'laan tribal group on Mindanao were tortured by the military into admitting that they were communist rebels.

In August, soldiers were accused of killing five members of a Lumad family, including two children, in the island's Bukidnon province. According to the Manila *Times*, the military said that the people it killed were communist guerrillas; the New People's Army denies that.

A few weeks later, claims Karapatan — a rights organization that collects firsthand accounts of paramilitary and military abuses — members of the Mahagat-Bagani militia, which it describes as a government-backed paramilitary group, assassinated the director of a tribal school in Surigao del Sur province.

"There is basically a civil war going on and that cannot be denied," Carlos Conde, a HRW researcher based in the Philippines, tells TIME. "The fear in many of these people is palpable when you talk to them."

According to the text of a resolution before the Philippine Senate calling for a probe into the violence, Mahagat-Bagani members stormed through the tribal school in Diatagon village at around 4 a.m. on Sept. 1, holding teachers at gunpoint, one of them five months pregnant.

Eyewitnesses tell TIME that the armed men stole laptops and other items.

“I thought that things like this could only happen in movies,” Gary Payac, one of the volunteer teachers at the school that night, tells TIME. “I never thought that these things could happen right in front of my eyes.”

Payac and a few other teachers discovered the body of the tribal school executive director Emerito Samarca lying face down in the guest house of the school, bloodied and hogtied with a slit on his neck, and several stab wounds on his body.

After the killing, some 2,000 indigenous residents fled their homes for Tandag city, where they are currently sheltering in an open-air sports complex

The Mahagat-Bagani has also been accused of killing two tribal community leaders, Dionel Campos and his cousin Bello Sinzo, according to a statement issued by the office of Philippine Senator Grace Poe, who has been leading the call for an upper-house inquiry.

The Philippine army strongly denies any association with the Mahagat-Bagani and has said that it welcomes a proposal by Karapatan to raise the killings of indigenous people before the U.N. Human Rights Council.

The Philippine army’s Colonel Benjamin Hao tells TIME the Philippine army is only stationed in Lumad regions to clear the area of the New People’s Army and provide medical assistance.

“We are doing our jobs,” Hao says.

In response to a public outcry, Philippine President Benigno Aquino III said last Tuesday in a public statement that “there is no campaign to kill anybody in this country.”

Disputes over resources and land appear to lie at the root of at least some of the violence. According to Oona Thommes Paredes, an anthropologist at the National University of Singapore, some Lumad joined the New People’s Army back in the 1970s to fight the encroachment of mining and logging companies on their land.

Since the introduction of the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act in 1997, the Lumad have had official rights to their ancestral territories. However, Paredes says, large logging and mining companies find ways around the law by bribing not only local bureaucrats but also tribal leaders themselves.

“If someone wants to do logging, they have to get permission,” Paredes tells TIME. “These large corporations, because of the money they have, do not just bribe government bureaucrats, but people on the inside of these communities.”

Direct Link: http://time.com/4028811/philippines-lumad-mindanao-indigenous-military-war-killings/

A Mega-Canal In Nicaragua Could Kill Off Jaguars and Indigenous Groups

By Eva Hershaw

September 15, 2015 | 11:20 am

It's a new take on an old question: How do you get a jaguar to cross a canal?

For wildlife biologists working in Nicaragua, at least one of the answers is simple: you first lead it to water. But if authorities don't take measures to ensure the existence of land-to-water wildlife corridors in the construction of the $50 billion mega-canal slated to cut through Nicaragua, they will risk the loss of one of the country's most emblematic and endangered species.

With major construction scheduled to begin at the end of the year, wildlife biologists are calling the project hasty, secretive, and potentially disastrous for the region's flora and fauna. New data gathered by Global Wildlife Conservation and Panthera, in collaboration with Michigan State University, shows that two major genetic pathways for jaguars and other large mammals from Central America will be cut in two by the Nicaraguan Interoceanic Canal.

"Fragmentation is the nemesis of biodiversity," Howard Quigley, Jaguar Program Executive Director for Panthera, said. "Whenever your fragment or isolate a population, you make that population smaller and cut off gene flow." That gene flow, he explained, is what offers ecosystems resilience and guarantees that a species has enough individuals to survive in the long term. "Any time you sever that connectivity within a system, you put a nail in the coffin of those species," Quigley added.

Conservation groups have found natural allies in the indigenous communities whose land falls within the concession.

The canal project has drawn heavy fire since 2013, when the Hong Kong-based Nicaraguan Canal Development Company (HKND) received a concession from the Nicaraguan government to build the $50 billion canal. The 173-mile mega-canal, which will accommodate large container ships and tankers unable to pass through the Panama

Canal, is promising to double the GDP of the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

Authors of the study have submitted a technical report to the government of President Daniel Ortega, offering suggestions on ways to mitigate biodiversity loss that include offering access points where natural vegetation and wildlife would have access to the edge of the canal. Similar methods have been successful in reducing harm to wildlife along the Panama Canal and these points of connectivity, biologists say, will be key to allowing the movement, reproduction, and survival of jaguars, tapirs, and peccaries in Nicaragua.

"It's a narrow strip of land, and it is very important that those corridors are maintained," Wes Sechrest, chief scientist and CEO of Global Wildlife Conservation, said. "This situation is unlike that of the Amazon, for example, where cutting up a parcel may not affect the gene flow in the same way as a place like Nicaragua."

In 1992, Nicaragua signed the international Convention of Biodiversity and in 2014, the government signed an explicit agreement with Panthera, pledging to undertake conservation activities that would maintain the connection and protection of jaguars throughout the Mesoamerican isthmus.

But if the government is taking precautions to protect the environment during canal construction, it has thus far been hard to tell. HKND hired British-based Environmental Resource Management (ERM) to carry out an environmental and social impact assessment. ERM delivered the report to Nicaraguan authorities in May, but it has not yet been released to the public. But an independent review panel, which gained access to portions of the file, has cast doubt on the report, claiming that it was assembled too quickly and without sufficient input from experts.

"We hope that none of this would be done without the best scientists in the world taking part; the timeline has been very, very short," Sechrest said. "Do these companies come in and provide the environmental and social security that they have promised? These are the questions the Nicaraguan people and government need to be asking."

His organization and other conservation groups have found natural allies in the indigenous communities whose land falls within the HKND concession granted by the Ortega government. In 2012, the Nicaraguan parliament passed a concession law that, among other things, grants the Chinese company exclusive rights to land along the canal route, 52 percent of which passes through indigenous territories. Costa Rica-based lawyer Luis Carlos Buob, with the Center for Justice and International Law, estimates that construction could displace 119,000 people.

The preservation of indigenous land guarantees the corridors traversed by animals such as the jaguar and the fate of these animals is tied to the wellbeing of communities like the Rama-Kriol.

"We have a saying," Norvin Salomon, secretary of the Rama-Kriol Territorial Government, said. "The earth is our mother. If you sell the earth, you are selling your mother." He said that the passage of the concession law, which bypassed international law that requires the consent of indigenous populations, had stripped the communities of their negotiating power. "Our community is asking the state to seek consent … and to carry out a scientific study of all of the impact," Salomon added.

With minor construction already underway, HKND says the canal could be finished as early as 2019. But for biologists like Quigley, there is still time for the government to seek scientific input and reduce the environmental impact of the canal. "Our job is to provide the information," he said. "But our hope, of course, is that the information will be absorbed and understood and that we can work together to build a better road map."

Direct Link: https://news.vice.com/article/a-mega-canal-in-nicaragua-could-kill-off-jaguars-and-indigenous-groups

Legislation Seeks to Improve Access to Healthy Meals for Native American Students

Updated: Tue 5:57 PM, Sep 15, 2015
By: Nick Amatangelo - Email

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., has sponsored legislation to improve the access Native American students have to healthy meals at school.

The Tribal Nutrition Improvement Act seeks to remove barriers that keep Native American Tribes from accessing school nutrition resources.

Currently, programs like the School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program, among other initiatives, are not available to members of Native American Tribes.

This comes on the back of a 2012 USDA report that claims 23 percent of Native American households didn't have access to a healthy meal due to poverty.

Direct Link: http://www.kfyrtv.com/home/headlines/Legislation-Improves-Access-to-Healthy-Meals-for-Native-American-Students-327782421.html

Key initiative puts new focus on better health among Native Americans

"Seeds of Native Health" is off to a good start but merits deeper support.
By Editorial Board Star Tribune
September 15, 2015 — 6:25pm

DAVID JOLES • Star Tribune Lori Watso, the secretary/treasurer of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Community, announced the $5 million Seeds of Native Health in March with University of Minnesota President Eric Kaler, center, and Keith Anderson, tribal vice chairman.

Six months ago, Minnesota's Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community garnered well-deserved praise when it announced a $5 million "Seeds of Native Health" initiative to tackle a daunting public health challenge: improving Native American nutrition.

With the first round of grant recipients just announced, this influential southern-metro tribal nation laudably isn't pausing to take a rest. Instead, it's poised to take an ambitious step to broaden the initiative's reach. In mid-October, it will host a gathering of some of the nation's most respected national philanthropic organizations to "specifically focus on this nutritional crisis in Indian Country,'' said Lori Watso, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Community's secretary/treasurer.

The goal of the gathering, believed to be the first of its kind, is not only to raise awareness but to enlist these organizations' support to improve nutrition in Native American communities. The other philanthropies shouldn't hesitate to join the campaign. This is an overdue public health need, one long neglected by the federal government, and a worthy use of these organizations' resources.

Grim is the only word to describe Native American health statistics. Life expectancy is 4.2 years lower than the national average. Obesity is a common risk factor for many of the diseases this group is at high risk for, including Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Focusing on prevention through better nutrition is eminently sensible.

The Seeds of Native Health's first 15 grants, which totaled $523,000, were made through project partner First Nations Development Institute. Two of the grant recipients are the Red Lake and Leech Lake tribal nations within Minnesota borders. Recipients of the other grants are 13 tribes or organizations in 10 other states, with another round of grants through a different project partner expected soon.

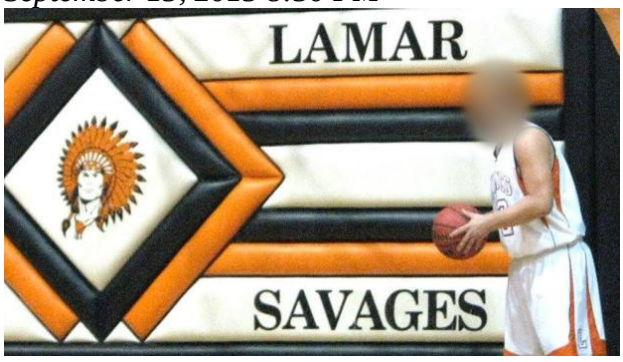
The initiative also has announced a landmark partnership with the University of Arkansas School of Law and MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. That effort will yield model regulations and policies for tribal nations growing and distributing food.

Seeds of Native Health is clearly off to a strong start, but broader support is needed to sustain this important public health campaign's momentum.

Direct Link: http://www.startribune.com/key-initiative-puts-new-focus-on-better-health-among-native-americans/327783661/

Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia Behind New Push To Change Native American Mascots

September 15, 2015 8:50 PM



DENVER (CBS4) – There's a new push to change Native American mascots in Colorado schools.

Native American groups believe school mascots such as the Lamar Savages and La Veta Redskins in Colorado are highly offensive. Colorado Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia agrees.

Garcia told The Durango Herald there are better ways to honor Native American culture. He's now working with the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs to establish a group that will work with schools to address the issue.

"We need to say to schools, 'Your name, your mascot isn't respectful and if you want to honor Native American culture in your community there are better ways to do that, and let us help you,'" Garcia said, according to The Durango Herald. "I think that would be less threatening and less coercive and hopefully more productive."

Direct Link: http://denver.cbslocal.com/2015/09/15/lt-gov-joe-garcia-behind-new-push-to-change-native-american-mascots/

Native American veteran gets headstone for Civil War service

A headstone at Joseph Fisher's grave in Woodland Cemetery, Rosebush. Courtesy photo.

By Anna Palm, Morning Sun

Posted: 09/16/15, 11:36 AM EDT | Updated: 2 hrs ago

For 97 years, Pvt. Joseph A. Fisher has been buried in an unmarked grave in Woodland Cemetery in Rosebush.

On behalf of the Swartz Creek Area Historical Society, the Native American veteran has now received a Civil War headstone and will be recognized for his service in a grave dedication ceremony on Oct. 10 at 11 a.m.

A similar event took place in Chippewa Cemetery on June 11 for Joseph's older brother, Madison, whose grave had also remained unmarked since 1906.

The historical society's president, Len Thomas, said the issue came to their attention when members Kristie and Scott Potter, descendants of the Fisher brothers, pointed out that there were no official Civil War headstones in place.

"They're veterans and they deserve to be honored," Thomas said. "The emphasis is now on WWII veterans, because it's more recent, but the Civil War veterans served our country too, and put themselves in harm's way on our own soil."

At the time, the society had documents stating that Madison was in Chippewa Cemetery, but none about Joseph. However, they assumed he was also there since both brothers had worked on Crapo farm in the area so they ordered two government-issued headstones.

Thomas said the one for Madison arrived first and when Joseph's came to his driveway, he received a letter from

Kristie. Through research, she had found a death certificate for the younger brother along with one for his wife Elizabeth "Eliza" Fisher, which revealed that Joseph lied buried next to Eliza in Woodland Cemetery.

"I was glad to find that Kristie and Scott Potter found the death certificate," Thomas said. "They

have been overwhelmed by us working so hard to get an official headstone for their relatives.

During the ceremony for Madison, they were extremely, extremely emotional about it."

Kristie Potter said she took it upon herself to see what she could find out about her ancestor, which led her to the death certificate. The son, Peter Fisher, filled out both his father's as well as his mother's death certificate.

Isabella Township Clerk Cara Lynch, who received the call from Thomas regarding Joseph's resting place, said Woodside Cemetery has an entire section on the northern side that they call "the old cemetery." The headstones there are gone so it looks like an open area, but Native Americans have been buried there.

"Personally I know there are unmarked graves, because the old markers have fallen victim to damage or vandalism, some have deteriorated and others were never marked at all," Lynch said.

She added not everyone could afford to have a stone made back then. Instead people used a wooden cross, and other cemeteries have had wooden headstones, which are essentially a wooden board with the basic information, which all give way after time.

A family can call the Veteran's Affairs and request a headstone, or a brass marker. The government will issue one or the other or both at no cost. During the wait, Woodside Cemetery uses a flag holder to mark the grave.

In regards to Joseph Fisher, Lynch said a lot of records for the cemeteries from the 1800s to the early 1900s are limited, because they didn't keep good records on who was buried and where.

Isabella Township has records of receipts back to 1930, but before that she said they don't know which plots were sold.

"The Cemetery Deed books say who purchased the plot, but not who is buried in the plot," she said. "Sometimes a family would buy several plots and they were all listed under one name so it's unclear who is buried there without a headstone stating the name."

Thomas said a few other reasons why graves from that time are unmarked may be because the death certificates back then probably didn't have a place stating the deceased person was a Civil War veteran or any kind of veteran. In other cases, some soldiers were buried on the battlefield or out of state. Sometimes, the family members didn't know that their relative had died or where they were buried due to these circumstances.

"You'd be surprised how many (unmarked graves) you can find out there," he added.

Since 2002, Thomas and his wife have visited cemeteries in the counties of Isabella, Genesse and Lapeer. So far they've discovered 9,000 Civil War graves and sent 60 applications for GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) flag holders, which are grave markers for Union soldiers. He said he feels very passionate about his personal project to assure that Civil War veterans receive the honor they deserve.

"I'm 75 years old and my generation may be the last generation to remember or look back on the Civil War veterans."

Joseph Fisher served in the 8th Michigan Calvary, Company M from Feb. 11, 1863 to July 5, 1864. He died at the age of 78 on Dec. 1, 1918.

Kristie said she would most definitely be at the ceremony, because giving her ancestor a Civil

War headstone is an honor.

"It has everything to do with respect, it has everything to do with Native Americans and the struggles they've had," she said. "And despite that, they were brave enough to stand up and fight for their country. It was because of pride, a deep pride in their country."

Direct Link: http://www.themorningsun.com/general-news/20150916/native-american-veteran-gets-headstone-for-civil-war-service

Indian Enough for Dartmouth?

September 17, 2015

By Scott Jaschik

Dartmouth College this month appointed Susan Taffe Reed as director of its Native American Program. In a news release, the college noted Taffe Reed's academic background (a Cornell University Ph.D. and postdocs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Bowdoin College), her research interest (ethnomusicology) and something else: Taffe Reed, Dartmouth noted, is president of Eastern Delaware Nations Inc.

If Dartmouth expected applause for hiring someone with a strong academic background and a personal background that would appeal to its Native American students, whom the program serves, it was mistaken.

Not all Native Americans recognize Eastern Delaware Nations as an Indian tribe. Nor do federal or state governments. So leading the group wasn't seen as a plus, but as a minus. And then a blog ran a detailed genealogical post about Taffe Reed's grandparents (from whom she draws a Native American connection) alleging, with legal documents, that they are white European immigrants and their descendants. Dartmouth and Taffe Reed dispute the blog post, but did not issue a detailed rebuttal.

From there it went to social media, with people writing on the Facebook page of Dartmouth's Native American Alumni Association that the college was insulting Native Americans, not supporting them. One post said: "Congratulations Dartmouth on hiring your very own Rachel Dolezal as the director of the Native American Program. Susan Taffe Reed is not a member of a federally recognized tribe nor does she have legitimate Native American ancestry."

The reference to Rachel Dolezal -- who was head of the Spokane, Wash., NAACP and an adjunct instructor of Africana studies at Eastern Washington University when it was revealed over the summer that she is white, despite her claims to the contrary -- is significant, even if Taffe Reed and Dartmouth officials say that she hasn't distorted her background and that the comparison is unfair.

Nonetheless, criticism of her appointment comes at a time of scrutiny of people who have claimed a racial or ethnic status that not everyone feels is accurate. There was the case of Andrea Smith, associate professor of media and cultural studies at the University of California at Riverside, who shortly after the Dolezal scandal broke was accused of faking a Cherokee heritage that many say she lacks. And there is the recent case of a white man who published poetry with a Chinese name.

Adding to the scrutiny for Taffe Reed is Dartmouth's history. The college was founded to educate Native Americans. While the 18th-century definition of educating Native Americans would not win support today, and didn't last as a focus of Dartmouth, the college since the 1970s has embraced that mission again, boasting of educating more Native American students than other Ivies or elite colleges.

A key difference between the Dolezal and Smith cases and that of Taffe Reed, Dartmouth says, is that she was forthright about an identity of mixed Native American and European heritage.

A statement from the college notes awareness that some Native Americans do not consider the Eastern Delaware Nations to be a tribe, but the college characterizes this as a dispute among different groups and not one for Dartmouth to judge.

"Susan Taffe Reed never represented herself as a member of a federally recognized tribe," the college's statement says. "It is illegal to hire or deny employment based on an individual's ethnicity; Susan was offered the position based on her skills and experience. The search committee was comprised of members of the community she will serve and they are fully confident in her abilities. While we recognize the legitimacy of the concern that individuals may falsely identify themselves as Native American, Dartmouth also understands that there are varying perspectives in the Native American community over what constitutes ethnicity, which is a separate issue from false claims of ethnicity. It is not up to Dartmouth to determine which perspective is correct."

That statement, however, has not satisfied some Native American scholars and activists, who have been circulating the blog post about Taffe Reed's background and speaking out against the college's decision. Generally, these Native Americans say they see roles for many different kinds of people -- including people without any Native American heritage -- in doing scholarship on American Indians and helping American Indian students.

Their anger is largely about the Eastern Delaware Nations. That group's website states clearly that it is not a recognized tribe, but says that its members come from 12 tribes that were present in Pennsylvania. The website also states that some of its members "are not of American Indian descent, but join as social members in support of a family member or to assist EDN in educational outreach and other activities."

Michelle Leonard, who is an active member of the Shinnecock Indian Nation, said that Native Americans have lost much of their history to "cultural thieves," who "appropriate" parts of Native American history and culture without truly being part of the communities they claim to embrace. "It's embarrassing and upsetting" that Dartmouth doesn't see the conflict over the group Taffe Reed leads, Leonard said.

The frustration is particularly strong for some members of the Delaware Tribe, which is a federally recognized tribe. Some Delaware leaders believe Eastern Delaware implies some level of connection to the Delaware. Nicky Michael, a member of the Delaware Tribal Council and a visiting professor of Native American history at the University of

Wyoming, said that the Delaware Tribe members ended up in Oklahoma after six forced relocations by the United States government, and that history means something to members.

Michael said she would not have objected had Dartmouth selected a white person to lead the Native American Program. "I could swallow it if she was a non-Indian and got her job in her own right. I know a lot of academics who are [white] and involved with Native Americans, and they do fine. But to pretend to be something you aren't is different." She said that the Eastern Delaware group led by Taffe Reed "is using our culture and our name and she is using it to gain access to a position like that."

"I know what students have fought for" in programs for Native Americans, "and they have fought for the inclusion of real Native peoples," she said.

Because Dartmouth has, she said, supported Native American scholarship and Native American students, "this is a real stab at my heart."

Taffe Reed declined to participate in a direct interview, but agreed to answer a few questions via email. She did not respond to a question asking about her background and the claims made on the blog about her, but she indicated that some of the information on the website was not accurate, without providing details.

Issues of identity are important to her, Taffe Reed said. "My ties to all aspects of my identity are very important to me. Throughout this process, I have been forthright about my personal and professional experience. Given the history of this continent, it is not uncommon for Native identities to be mixed and complex. The Native and campus community at Dartmouth is inclusive of all backgrounds and experiences. It is important to me that all of our students feel welcome, engaged and supported no matter where they come from. My job is to provide academic, cultural and personal support to all Native students. When I teach in the classroom, the best learning experience comes from the variety of experiences and perspectives represented. Native students coming from different backgrounds learn from one another’s experience in ways that enrich their own."

As to the questions raised about the Eastern Delaware Nations, Taffe Reed said that not only was she a member of that group, but that her research was based there. "My most recent academic scholarship is about powwow music and dance, and the experience of Native peoples in the mountains of Pennsylvania. It is a diverse group of people with a rich oral history and body of experience to share. I look forward to sharing my work and my experience with the Dartmouth community. It is simply inaccurate to say that there are no people of Native American descent in Pennsylvania."

Asked for her reaction to the online critiques of her hire, Taffe Reed said: "I am concerned about ways in which questions of identity and authenticity affect [students]. Sadly, it is a teachable moment that enables our students to reflect on the complex history

and issues of identity in Indian country. I want all of our Native students to feel equally valued and welcome."

Direct Link: https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/09/17/indian-activists-raise-questions-about-woman-appointed-lead-native-american-program